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PM
PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

INSIDE

SPECIAL ISSUE! SUSTAINABILITY

SUSTAINABILITY:
THE LEADERSHIP DIFFERENCE WE MUST PROVIDE

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This issue of *PM* is available online at icma.org/pm June 1, 2012.

BY TAD MCGALLIARD

REFRAMING THE SUSTAINABILITY CONVERSATION FROM *WHAT* TO *HOW*

In an early 1980s music video, the still popular U2 rock group from Dublin, Ireland, prefaced the live version of an early megahit with singer Bono saying, "There has been a lot of talk about this next song, maybe too much talk." The same can be said about the national discourse and the water-cooler conversations on the meaning of sustainability.

Thoughts and Expectations

Some of today's critics present sustainability as a dangerous philosophy that promotes a not-too-distant future in which freedom, liberty, and the timeless aspirations of leaving a better life for our kids are trampled by a new world order outlined in a United Nations document known as Agenda 21. Yet others suggest that sustainability is the green pathway to our harmoniously converged future, where the lion lies down with the lamb.

Neither extreme seems to frame the issue of sustainability accurately.

So what is sustainability? Simply put, sustainability is the ability of communities to consistently thrive over time as they make decisions to improve the community today without sacrificing the future.

Although the term sustainability is often associated with the environment, this is only one aspect of building a sustainable community. In fact, we've been asked more than once why we didn't align this issue of *Public Management (PM)* magazine with World Water Day (March) or Earth Day (April). Doing so would have suggested that sustainability was exclusively an environmental or "green" issue.

Communities need clean air and water, jobs that pay living wages, and a social compact within which people of all religions, political persuasions, races, and age groups live and work together safely.

SUSTAINABILITY IS THE ABILITY OF COMMUNITIES TO CONSISTENTLY THRIVE OVER TIME AS THEY MAKE DECISIONS TO IMPROVE THE COMMUNITY TODAY WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE FUTURE.

Viewed comprehensively, sustainability can provide an organizing framework for building better and stronger communities. Building sustainable communities is at the core of the leadership responsibilities of local government leaders. In the words of the *ICMA Strategic Plan*, "now more than ever, local government managers must provide sound, professional, and ethical leadership to their communities as well as guidance and support to their elected officials; they must bring innovation and efficiency to the task of building sustainable communities."

In This Issue

In this special issue of *PM* and in other communications too, we present a number of articles that are intended to recapture some of the high ground around sustainability by reframing the debate from "what is sustainability and what does it mean" toward "how do we create a better community in which to live, work, and play?"

The articles you can read here are the vanguard of a continuing body of knowledge and resources available for you. Additional case studies and thought pieces are presented in the online version of *PM* magazine (online at icma.org/pm beginning May 27, 2012), along with the sustainability topic page of the Knowledge Network (www.icma.org/kn), and delivered through other ICMA channels to managers in the profession.

"There's some hard times in the neighborhood," goes the refrain from Darrell Scott's song, "It's a Great Day to Be Alive" (also made popular in a remake by singer Travis Tritt), an apt metaphor for our local governments in the wake of the Great Recession. But all of you in the local government management profession are working hard to create better communities, as you always have and always will, through the good times and the bad.

I hope the articles and knowledge resources made available in this issue and elsewhere provide a tailwind for your efforts. PM

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BY MARTHA PEREGO

SUSTAINABILITY: IT'S A RIGHT-VERSUS-RIGHT ISSUE

Is there a way to define sustainability success?

Local government leaders have defined sustainability as the predominant issue of the age. That said, there is considerable debate about what sustainability really means. Is sustainability a good management practice or a leadership imperative?

Is it defined by the triple bottom line of environment, economy, and equity? Or should there be another metric of success?

There may not be at this stage a clear, universally accepted definition of what sustainability means. And lacking that, we may not be in agreement about the way forward. But one thing that we should agree on is that the underlying principles were embraced by the local government profession from the very beginning. And they remain core to the profession to this very day.

When those pioneer city managers drafted the first Code of Ethics in 1924 to define the values for a new profession, they thought about the future of the communities they led.

Back in the Day

"A City Manager will be known by his works, many of which may outlast him, and regardless of personal popularity or unpopularity, he should not curry favor or temporize but should in a far-sighted way aim to benefit the community of today and of posterity."

This 1924 statement from the Code could have been interpreted more to emphasize the responsibility of individuals to set aside their egos in the pursuit of professional accomplishments than to build for the future. Societal changes brought new obligations and challenges that perhaps helped the profession better define its values.

In 1938, the ICMA Code of Ethics dropped the tenet above but added this one: "The city manager has a firm belief in the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government and a deep sense of his own social responsibility as a trusted public servant."

The reference to social responsibility makes the ethical commitment of the profession and the professional clear. As individuals, we have an ethical obligation to act so that the community and society at large benefit.

PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

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Success isn't just meeting the needs of one segment of the community at the expense of others. Nor is success found in short-term gains made at the expense of long-term accomplishments. Building communities that would last and meet the needs of future generations required a commitment to social responsibility.

Fine-tuned over time, Tenet 2 of the ICMA Code of Ethics calls all professionals to "Affirm the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government and maintain a constructive, creative, and practical attitude toward local government affairs and a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant."

Philosophy

With our guiding principles in hand, how do we move forward? Begin by recognizing that, for the most part, issues around sustainability are right-versus-right dilemmas. The values on both sides of the equation are legitimate and good.

These are not the typical ethical issues of good versus evil or right versus wrong. The decisions local government managers make in the sustainability arena are hard because the underlying values involved in any of the options are sound.

The Greeks gave us the Athenian Code that prompts us to leave our communities in better shape than we found them. That requires us to think beyond tomorrow and not to worry about who gets the credit.

As the Greek proverb reminds us: "A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit." PM

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WHAT IS A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY?

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A sustainable community demonstrates through policy and practices a long-term view and respect for people and for place. Sustainability entails living mindfully of the future, embracing and respecting life in the present, and caring for the well-being of generations to follow.

Sustainable communities require leaders who practice transformational stewardship, seek to protect the commons, and enhance civic life and economic vitality. They make deliberate strategic choices specific to their communities about available alternative futures.

Acknowledging the forces shaping their community, they proactively mitigate or adapt to impacts to secure a resilient future. They select technologies that conserve resources, use collaborative processes to devise local solutions, and protect the diversity of local natural systems.

Recognizing their interconnectedness through systems thinking, these communities encourage an overarching civic ethic of stewardship and seek intergenerational fairness, conflict resolution, and empathy for all life within their community.

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Lynchburg has taken a holistic approach to defining a vision for sustainability. A few years ago, I convened a group of cross-departmental critical thinkers and posed the question: What are the elements that we need to focus on that will make Lynchburg a sustainable city well beyond our lifetimes?

Arts and culture, citizen engagement and social capital, economic development, healthy and active living, infrastructure, lifelong learning, land use, natural and environmental resources, neighborhoods, safe community, and transportation emerged as the elements that define our vision of a sustainable Lynchburg.

City council has endorsed these elements as critical to our city's future and needed to inform the decision-making process as we face the challenge of surviving and thriving through a fiscal environment that none of us has ever experienced.

Our next step in working toward our vision is to engage the community and define metrics to ensure we are indeed "sustainable Lynchburg" for years to come.

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A manager new to a community needs to determine that community's vision for sustainability. To do so, I would use the concept of the triple bottom line (as proffered by ICMA) of environment, economics, and (social) equity. Often we think of sustainability only in terms of "green" issues and the environment. What are we doing for sea-level rise and climate change adaptation? Are we recycling enough? How are we fueling our fleets?

But a truly sustainable community will also ask questions centering on equity and economics. For example, How will land use changes resulting from sea-level rise affect our affordable housing strategy? How will our tax base be affected?

When considering new programs and policies, the sustainable community will assess impact on all three areas: ensuring a positive effect on the environment, establishing that there will not be a drain on community resources, and making certain that disparaging treatment for any sector of the community will not be created. Sustainable communities will find that sweet spot.

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After serving 10 years on the city council in Dubuque, Roy D. Buol was elected mayor in 2005. During the 2006 city council goal-setting process, Mayor Buol received full support from his council colleagues to focus on sustainability as a top priority of the city. He stated that "cities that get out in front on sustainability will have competitive economic advantages in the future."

The council moved immediately to create a citywide citizen task force, supported by city staff, to develop a comprehensive definition of what sustainability meant to Dubuque. The collective desire of our citizens to create value and a legacy of life quality through sustainable practices and programs was defined.

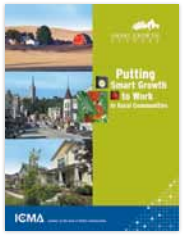
The "sustainable Dubuque" framework has become the lens through which city operations are developed and analyzed. Likewise, numerous community initiatives along with the Business Innovation Consortium are finding ways to save money and improve the environment and the community by implementing the principles that define sustainable Dubuque. PM

1 GEORGIA ON MY MIND—BROWNFIELDS 2013

ICMA will again manage the communication, outreach, and educational program for the National Brownfields Conference. With more than 5,000 attendees, 200 exhibitors, and 100-plus educational sessions, the conference is the largest of its kind. The next conference is May 15–17, 2013, at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.

▸ brownfieldsconference.org

2 SMART GROWTH IN RURAL PLACES



Some 18 months after its publication, *Putting Smart Growth to Work in Rural Communities* remains one of ICMA's most popular downloads. It provides rural decisionmakers with a resource for balancing competing goals while creating more vibrant and sustainable communities.

▸ icma.org/ruralsmartgrowth

3 BUILDING KNOWLEDGE THROUGH CITYLINKS

To support its USAID-funded CityLinks program, ICMA has launched a new website that provides a focal point for knowledge sharing on three urgent challenges in today's rapidly urbanizing world: climate change, food security, and water and sanitation.

▸ icma.org/citylinks

KNOWLEDGE NETWORK

TOP 10 SUSTAINABILITY TOPIC PAGES

Here is a list of the top 10 Knowledge Network topic pages related to sustainability. Some 200 more topic pages also provide sustainability information, resources, and networking opportunities.

- Active Living
- Brownfields
- Citizen Engagement
- Energy Efficiency
- Environmental Management Systems
- Food Security
- Smart Growth
- Shared Services
- Solar Energy
- Sustainability

▸ www.icma.org/kn

4

By Michael Willis, ICMA-CM

SUSTAINABILITY: THE LEADERSHIP DIFFERENCE

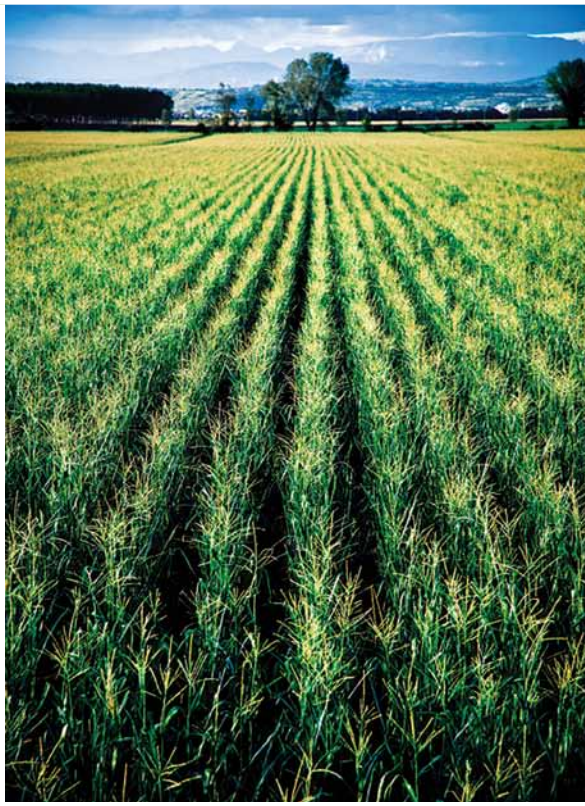
We Must PROVIDE

LOOK AT IT AS THE ISSUE OF OUR AGE

The future will always belong to those who are prepared to face it. It always has, it always will.

In the same vein, former British prime minister Tony Blair has challenged the notion of Western politics being based on divisions of the left and the right. For him, the distinction was more accurately between those who are prepared to embrace reform and the challenge of change and those who are not.

» *Continued on page 10*



TAKEAWAYS

- The last five years have shown that sustainability has stickability. It's still here, and it matters even more than it did.
- Events matter. They are opportunities to be both the catalyst and the driver for future sustainable change.

At its essence, sustainability is all about facing the future— of devising ways and means to meet the environmental, social, and economic challenges the future presents. Although one may learn from the past, that alone cannot provide the answers for tomorrow anymore than one can drive a car by staring into the rearview mirror.

In that spirit, in February 2007, the ICMA Executive Board decided to make sustainability a priority issue. It directed staff to launch efforts to position ICMA as a leader on the issue. Five years on, a lot has happened. Is it still the issue of our age, or has life passed it by? What needs to be done to ensure that it remains at the forefront of what we do as professional local government managers?

Events that Produced Change

It's important to reflect on how sustainability achieved such prominence. It grew out of the environmental movement in the latter part of the last century as well as the embrace of individual and community values on preserving and protecting our natural assets.

Sustainability, however, goes far beyond the preservation of places of great beauty. It encompasses the impact that our daily lives have on the quality of our local environment.

But sustainability wasn't just about the emergence of an enhanced value set. It was also fostered by an emerging body of evidence that pointed to the environmental calamity that was coming into view as a consequence of climate change.

To these two streams may be added a third: events.

Harold Macmillan, British prime minister of the 1950s and 1960s, was once asked what was likely to blow a government off course. He replied "Events, dear boy, events."

There were some pivotal events that spurred the sustainability movement, including the development of Agenda 21 from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (and the establishment of its companion volume, LA Agenda 21), the work of the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change, and of course Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth.*

Such events as these reshaped our civic consciousness, building on a growing understanding of environmental values and their connection to the importance of place.

Sadly perhaps, the rising tide of sustainability also created a wave of expectation and belief that could not be politically delivered. The 2009 UN Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen was to form a global political commitment to the agenda developed in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

If Rio represented a brave new sustainable world, Copenhagen was to sadly show that the commitment to it from world leaders was a mile wide but only an inch deep.

Such fragility increased as a result of the Great Recession of 2008, when the philosophy of sustainability took on a new and sometimes overwhelming emphasis: financial sustainability. How would our cities and communities survive against the financial disaster that had befallen many of them?

Has this aspect of sustainability had a corrosive effect on the heart of sustainability and led us to even pose the question of refreshing it as a concept? That has not been helped—in the United States, at least—by a rising distrust of the willingness or capacity of federal, national, and state governments to provide effective leadership on the environmental threats that have confronted us.

Future Vision

But take heart! Just as every dog has its day and every villain their moment in the spotlight, history does have a habit of being shaped by those who are prepared to face the future.

And there has been a sea change in attitudes to sustainability. On rereading the article, "The Issue of Our Age," published in the August 2006 issue of *PM*, I was struck by the amount of effort that was put into defining and explaining the concept of sustainability.

If nothing else has been achieved by ICMA in its leadership of that philosophy, it is that we have moved far beyond defining and explaining. ICMA's leadership has ensured that sustainability will be an everyday constant of our profession, which has in turn responded positively and enthusiastically to the challenge. And as we have led, others have followed.

As it was put to me recently: "By embracing sustainability, local governments have brought to the mainstream population the thinking that we must consider environmental, social, and economic impacts of our policies, programs, and practices both for today and for future generations. Local governments have become leaders in implementing changes themselves and prompting change through updates to laws and policies."[1]

The January/February 2012 online issue of *PM* included an electronic poll with the question, "What will the profession look like in 2020?" Of the five options offered, stronger commitment to sustainability came out on top (32 percent).

Research as well as anecdotal evidence confirms our leadership. The IBM Center for the Business of Government set out the findings of an ICMA survey on prioritizing environmental and energy programs in local government.[2] The report found that of the 2,000 localities that responded (8,000 local governments were approached), more than 80 percent reported initiatives on recycling, transportation, and building use. But not as many achievements were reported on alternative energy and workplace initiatives.

The report concludes:

"Sustainability may be 'the issue of our age,' but most local governments are still at a relatively early stage of addressing it. Most countries are taking some action, but the number remains limited. Based on past experience with the spread of other local government innovations, most cities and centers will significantly increase sustainable activity in the future."[3]

This provides a pointer to the future of sustainability: the challenge of integrating it into the management of our cities and communities. A 2012 Organization for Economic and Development (OECD) report on climate change, employment, and local development in Sydney, Australia, described this graphically in relation to the creation of low-carbon economies.

WE MUST REMAIN TRUE TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL HEART OF SUSTAINABILITY. THAT IS WHAT HAS PROVIDED THE SOUL, THE ENERGY, AND THE SENSE OF URGENCY THAT IS AT THE CORE OF ITS SUCCESS.

"Action is required at the local and metropolitan level. Cities consume more than two-thirds of the world's energy and account for 70 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. Well-designed regulations and programmes are required to accelerate the transition to a low carbon economy. This requires a commitment to innovation, research, investment in green infrastructure and skills, and strong partnerships that expand opportunities for green growth."[4]

So while we may fret at the lack of consistency of policy making on sustainability at the state and national levels, and obviously they have a powerful role to play, it is at the local level where committed and inspired leadership can make the difference that counts: in our local governments.

Events Will Be Shape Shifters

Critical to that leadership will be two key elements. First, we must remain true to the environmental heart of sustainability. That is what has provided the soul, the energy, and the sense of urgency that is at the core of its success.

Second, and paradoxically, we must continue to stretch the boundaries of what it means to be sustainable and to see it as the "the essential vehicle by which we must operate in the future."[5] By expanding its applicability, we strengthen it as a core concept of our managerial leadership.

Events will continue to shape that response and that leadership.

The UN-sponsored Durban climate summit late in 2011 did provide a result somewhere between the scenarios of "progress" and "breakthrough,"[6] with its agreement to negotiate a single, legally binding agreement by 2015 that will cover all major carbon pollution emitters. It also moved forward the establishment of the Green Climate Fund of $100 billion a year to help the world's poorest nations combat climate change; and the commitment must come from all countries to increase the level of ambition of national efforts to reduce pollution.

This month, June 2012, there will be a bookend to Rio de Janeiro 1992, with the meeting of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development. It will be called RIO + 20, and it will be an opportunity for an evaluation of Agenda 21 and, in particular, for promotion of local government advocacy and action to deliver local sustainability.

Looking into the future, we can find cause for both optimism and concern. United Nations statistics predict that the world's population will peak at 9 billion in 2070. On one level, that's good news; on another it is not.

The reason for the population slowdown and decline may be the result of the rise in developing economies of Western-style, small-family, high-relative-affluence, and resource-hungry lifestyles that have, until comparatively recently, been the preserve of the developed economies. The pressures on our environment will not fade; they will increase. Therefore, to pursue the cause of sustainability is to be on the right side of history.

We managers often see ourselves as being in the legacy business—of leaving our places, our communities, and our local economies in better shape than we found them. We work with civic leaders and with staff members to help achieve those aspirations by bringing our professional skills and knowledge to the table.

Our role in creating a sustainable future, however, must go far beyond professional competency. It must draw in the people we both advise and lead toward a better future that is in keeping with environmental constraints. But we must do more than simply show the way to that better future.

We must through our passion, our energy, and our commitment inspire others to take that path so that they share our belief that it is the right thing to do. That is the leadership difference we must provide, and that is how our profession must face the future. PM

ENDNOTES

1 Wally Bobkiewicz (city manager, Evanston, Illinois) and Catherine Hurley, (director of sustainability, Evanston, Illinois) in personal communication with the author.

2 James H. Svara, Anna Read, and Evelina Moulder, *Breaking New Ground: Promoting Environmental and Energy Programs in Local Government* (Washington, D.C.: IBM Center for the Business of Government, 2011).

3 Ibid., p. 3.

4 G. Miranda et al., *Climate Change, Employment and Local Development, Sydney, Australia* (Paris: OECD, 2011), p. 14.

5 Wally Bobkiewicz (city manager, Evanston, Illinois) and Catherine Hurley, (director of sustainability, Evanston, Illinois) in personal communication with the author.

6 *The Durban Climate Summit, Implications for Australia* (Sydney: Climate Institute, December 2011).

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By Tom Bakaly, ICMA-CM

IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABILITY

Chances Are, You're *Already* Doing It

And all with the right dimensions

TAKEAWAYS

- Think about sustainability as a mindset instead of a program or initiative.
- Help define a sustainability role that works best for your community.
- Integrate the sustainability function into your organization.
- Implement environmental sustainability ideas that are relatively simple and cost effective.

Despite vivid memories of my mother depositing me into the back of a wood-paneled station wagon, sick from inhaling smog during swim lessons in 1960s Los Angeles, I have not had the passion for environmental issues that I saw in others.

So, a few years ago when the new mayor of my community wanted the city to get more involved in environmental initiatives, I dropped into the bureaucratic fetal position. I claimed we lacked financial resources and city council direction to pursue these new initiatives, which almost felt like a social service program.

I have since wondered if it is still micromanagement if I agree with the elected officials. This is, however, a topic for another day.

The mayor persisted and took me with him to a mayors' climate change conference at the Sundance Resort. When other mayors gave him grief and asked why he had brought the city manager, he simply replied, "He is the one who is going to implement this stuff."

A Matter of Definition

I think when most people hear the word "sustainability" they immediately think of environmental issues and climate change. Many of them shut down at that point, as I did.

Sustainability is much broader than that. It is a mind-set regarding community, environmental, and economic initiatives that ensure the future viability of your local government. Before sustainability can be implemented, however, it must be defined and shaped into what is unique and best for your own community. One size does not fit all.

Before I explain Park City's recent experience with implementing sustainability, I must ask you to suspend disbelief. Many will say that a resort town that depends on visitors and $5-million second and third homes is an oxymoron when it comes to sustainability. Maybe, but we should acknowledge and move past that.

I think resort towns are somewhat rare, and they may be further along the sustainability curve than other local governments at this point because resort towns' economies are based on competition and environment. That was the hook for me—the economic connection to our environment and community.

When people ask how we are going to fare financially for the upcoming fiscal year, I reply, "As long as we get early snow, we ought to be okay." As a resort town, we will

never be perfectly sustainable, but that does not mean we are failing and should stop trying.

We began our implementation somewhat warily and methodically. We deliberately used words like "facilitate" and "assist" instead of words like "coordinate" or "manage" to literally set the tone for the city's role. Five years ago, the city broke the cardinal rule and built the environmental staff position around an existing employee rather than develop the scope of the position and then select the candidate.

I'd like to say that the position was located in the city manager's office to signify the organization's commitment to the environmental sustainability function. In truth, it was more about control and building my trust that we should be in this business. Being right for the wrong reason still counts.

Once comfortable with Park City's evolving role in sustainability, elected officials and management staff began to understand that sustainability *meant more than just environmental issues.*

Park City's Status

We started with getting some help to identify places in Park City where improvements in energy efficiency could be made. I was skeptical of how committed at a policy level councilmembers were to spending public funds for environmental projects. All councilmembers agreed that energy decisions should be based on return on investment and economy.

Thus far, we have implemented or planned internal energy- and water-saving measures with the potential to save more than $250,000 per year. The council has also funded a $100,000 internal revolving loan fund to finance energy- and fuel-saving activities that have a demonstrated financial payback. These measures conserve resources, prevent environmental damage, and ensure that taxpayer dollars are not wasted.

After they became comfortable with Park City's evolving role in sustainability, elected officials and management staff began to understand that sustainability meant more than just environmental issues. There already was a manager who focused on such community issues as affordable housing, public relations, and long-term planning as well as a manager who worked on such economic development issues as events, capital facilities, and redevelopment.

So it was decided to functionally align the three areas of economy, community, and environment in order to meet the council's sustainability goals. We did this by creating an ongoing self-directed work team of the three managers who were responsible for the function areas.

These managers serve as resources for each other, participate in 360-degree performance reviews, and are essentially self-managed. See Figure 1 for the team's organization chart.

I challenge managers to look at Figure 1 to find the similarities, not the differences, with services, programs, and projects being done in your organization. My guess is that, with some exceptions, at least 75 percent of these things are being done already.

This structure has allowed us to integrate sustainability into who we are. It is not some program, individual, or new idea the local government manager had after a conference. It is a core function for managers, just like public safety and recreation.

It has been interesting to see how the transit and water system departments interact with this team. They are not just checking a box, showing they talked to the environmental person, but staff members are actually weaving environmental, community, and economy principles as one concept into their operations. It is becoming a mind-set.

Okay, at this point some readers may have what I call the "Merlin" look on their faces. Merlin is my black lab, my canine friend who tilts his head to the side and points his ears up when he does not understand what I am saying. Here is an example. Seventy percent of Park City's revenue is based on visitors choosing to visit Park City instead of competing resort towns, cruise lines, or Las Vegas.

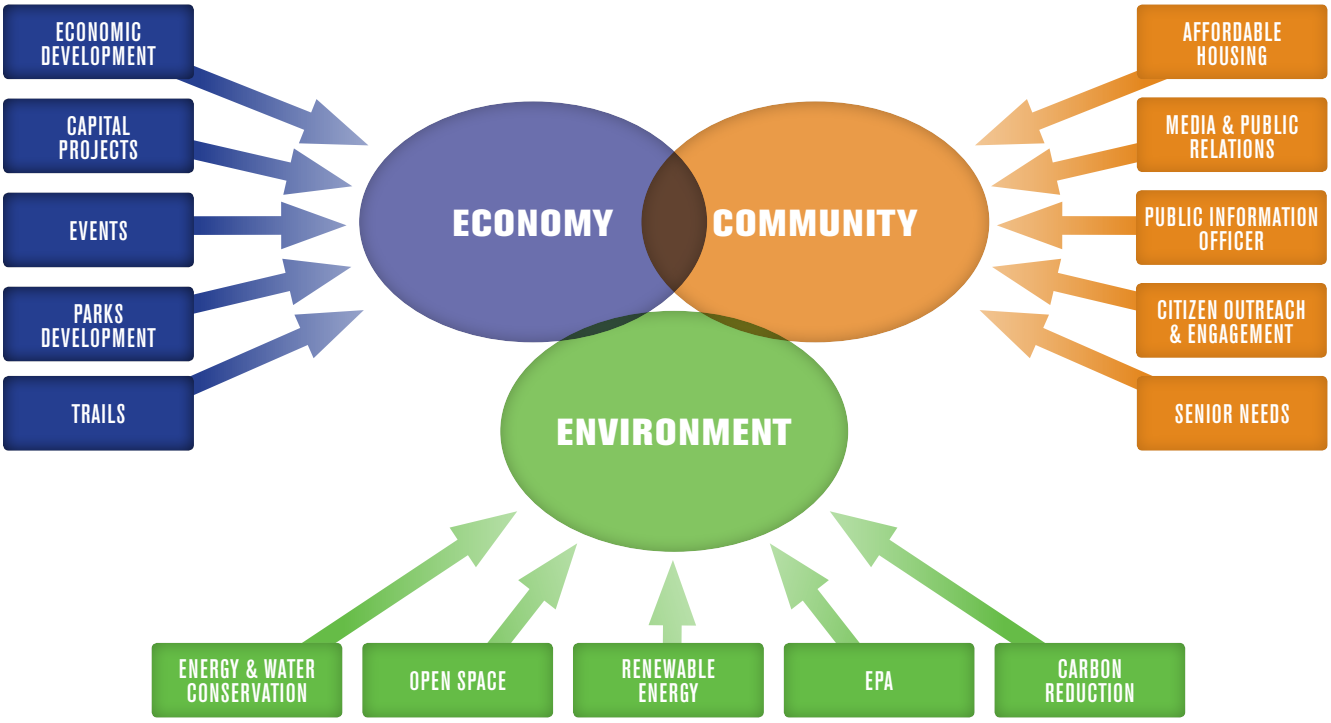
Their decision will be based on several factors. One factor will be the treatment they receive from the service community. If members of that service community (the police officer, bus driver, and waiter) live affordably in the community, are thus invested in the community's success (as ambassadors), and are not thinking about how to easily get home to their children if needed, their service provision is going to be better than if they lived 30 miles away.

One thing the city staff hear over and over and have documented in surveys is that people in Park City are engaged and extremely nice. Better customer service = return visitors = more revenue = more sustainability. Thus, providing affordable housing is not just a community program; it is the right thing to do. It directly contributes to the city's economy, not to mention that it reduces traffic, which enhances the visitor and resident experience.

Community Health Ratings

The other thing we have often done is measure the city's status and how customers rate our city's performance. I know personally that I tend to be healthier if I get on the scale frequently, and I think it is important to check out

FIGURE 1. Organizational Chart for Park City, Utah's Sustainability Team.



the city's health, too. Employee engagement surveys have been conducted for more than five years, and Park City recently joined the National Citizen Survey to help assess community health.

Park City's scores are high (good). We also calculated the community's carbon footprint, which scored high (bad). Again, we have developed a mind-set that we are willing to honestly look at ourselves, take risks with public opinion, improve, and be sustainable.

Here are some practical environmental sustainability programs that have been implemented and that also built community and helped our economy:

ParkCityGreen.org Website. I was born in the final year of the baby boom generation, so I struggle with the indirect communication of social media that has become the norm today. I know that if I want to have a relationship with my son, nieces, and nephews, I must text.

Similarly, if we want to engage our citizens, we must create convenient opportunities for them to plug into the governance engine and take responsibility themselves. One tool we have used effectively is a community outreach website called ParkCityGreen.org.

ParkCityGreen.org was launched in September 2009 and is used to connect with residents on environmental issues and encourage sustainable living. The website was created as a hyperlocal resource that includes such tools as a carbon footprint calculator, local events calendar, repository for local environmental reports, and a "Ways to Save" section to guide efficient decision making for households and businesses.

The website experienced tremendous success, with more than 25,000 total visits from roughly 12,000 unique visitors in its first 24 months after launch. The website continues to evolve and is home to an ever-growing portfolio of city environmental programs and projects.

Save Our Snow. In the spirit of facilitating and not solely owning initiatives, we partnered with a community foundation, business leaders, and media representatives to help people understand what snow levels might look like in 20 years and how that will impact our economy.

This was an idea we borrowed from one of our friends and competitors, the city of Aspen, Colorado. I don't want to stick my hand in the climate change badger cage, but scientists agree that glaciers are receding at an accelerating rate. Therefore, the snowpack will likely retreat to a location that's higher on the mountain.

We asked scientists and experts to calculate where snow levels would be in the future. We then enlisted the community to go on the mountain and form a human line that showed the future snow level. A video was created of this, using a helicopter and personal interviews, and then several community meetings and dialogues were held and attended by 1,500 people (20 percent of our permanent population). We won't change the world with this type of activity, but we are going to engage our community and alter mind-sets.

Low Carbon Diet. Park City recently leveraged the success of ParkCityGreen.org to initiate a new outreach program entitled the Low Carbon Diet. This community-based program engages

As I watch every layer of government from federal to local and associations, from mayors to planners claim to be at the forefront of environmental sustainability initiatives, *I wonder who is actually going to do the work that is necessary to help communities become wholly sustainable.*

households at the grass roots and encourages them to reduce their carbon footprint by 5,000 to 10,000 pounds of carbon dioxide per year.

Emission reductions are achieved by an assortment of strategies, including behavioral changes, energy efficiency upgrades, reduced water consumption, waste and recycling improvements, transportation changes, and dietary choices. Participating households have each been able to reduce their footprint by an average of 9,557 pounds of carbon dioxide, the equivalent of removing an entire vehicle from the road, while typically accruing net financial savings in the process.

Program information and an online reporting form for participants are available at ParkCityGreen.org.

The sustainability measure of success for each local government will be whether that community is a place children will want to visit and be able to live in. If you are like me, I got into this business to be where the rubber hits the road. I want to help shape and mold my community.

As I watch every layer of government, from federal to local and associations, from mayors to planners, claim to be at the forefront of environmental sustainability initiatives, I wonder who is actually going to do the work that is necessary to help communities become wholly sustainable.

I am obviously biased, but I think it is up to us as city and county managers. We should base our sustainability decisions today on one simple test: Will the manager 20 years from now be happy to see me when I come to visit? PM

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By Barbara Moore

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE

ICMA International is part of this remarkable effort

In the broadest sense, sustainable communities are those that maintain a reliable economic base, practice sound financial management, provide a stable environment for their residents, and act as stewards of their land and other environmental resources. Here is how these actions are defined:

Economic sustainability: To maintain a sound economic base, a local government must provide reliable public services, create an environment conducive to businesses, and take other steps to become and remain competitive in the global marketplace.

Financial sustainability: To remain financially viable, it must establish and maintain professionally recognized, transparent budgeting and financial management practices and systems.

Social sustainability: To provide a stable environment for citizens, it must ensure public safety, offer an environment that encourages job creation, engage the community in local decision making, and provide amenities that enhance the quality of life.

Environmental sustainability: And in achieving these objectives, a local government must safeguard its water supply, open space, and other physical assets by preparing for and mitigating natural disasters and by employing environmentally responsible methods for energy generation, waste reduction and disposal, and other services.

ICMA International fosters sustainable communities worldwide by introducing sound management practices that enable local governments to work toward these objectives. Together with diverse stakeholders—localities, nongovernmental organizations, civil society, national ministries—ICMA spearheads the design and implementation of locally viable approaches that improve the quality of government services and the quality of life for citizens. They are approaches that can be sustained long after ICMA's involvement ends.

Unless otherwise noted, the projects described here have been funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and many use ICMA's CityLinks model, in which professionals from a U.S. local government are partnered with their counterparts in another country.

TAKEAWAYS

› Sustainability encompasses much more than environmental practices; it has economic, financial, and social aspects as well.

› Through its international programs, ICMA seeks to foster lasting improvements in local government management and service delivery to build more sustainable communities worldwide.

› Professionals from U.S. cities and counties are sharing approaches to sustainability with their counterparts in developing and decentralizing countries.

Economic Sustainability

To be economically sustainable, a community needs to ensure that people have a means to support themselves and their families and that the economic base is diverse enough to weather ups and downs in the larger economy. A significant key to economic sustainability is competitiveness, and providing an environment in which private sector jobs can be created or maintained at the local and regional levels is critical.

Virtually all of ICMA's international projects help cities strengthen professional management, improve service delivery, and take other steps that can provide an attractive environment for private-sector investment.

Here are specific examples of programs in which ICMA has fostered economic sustainability.

Economic Development in Bulgaria. ICMA supported the creation of more than 4,000 jobs in Bulgaria through a comprehensive local economic development (LED) program that helped municipalities establish new economic development offices, train new LED professional staff, create business visitation and expansion programs and effective marketing strategies, establish business incubators and industrial parks, and develop an LED certification process.

This CityLinks program was carried out with participation from the Foundation for Local Government

Reform in Bulgaria and nine U.S. partners: the village of Johnstown, Ohio; the San Bernardino County (California) Economic Development Agency; and seven U.S. cities: Charlottesville, Virginia; Auburn, Alabama; Winchester, Virginia; Kettering, Ohio; West Carrollton, Ohio; Golden, Colorado; and West Bend, Wisconsin.

With their assistance, Bulgarian partner cities established a consortium to lead joint marketing efforts, including a website (www.invest.bg) that still serves as a source of information and a point of contact for prospective investors. ICMA also worked with each member city in the consortium to promote the city's strengths and business opportunities.

Economic Development in the Russian Far East. Faced with a declining fishing industry and a corresponding loss of population, the port city of Nevelsk, in the Russian Far East, sought to capitalize on tourism to diversify its economy. Another city, Bolshoy Kamen, wanted to increase the number of small local businesses, create markets for their products, and expand the tax base.

Nevelsk and Bolshoy Kamen were two of eight municipalities in the region that faced similar conditions: a harsh climate, neglected infrastructure, high energy and transportation costs, and a tradition of centralized planning and development. Because the area is rich in natural resources, that sector had been developed at the expense of a more diversified economy.

The eight cities were matched with CityLinks partners in Alaska, which were relatively close geographically and which shared some of the same climatic and geographic challenges: the cities of Wasilla, Anchorage, Kenai, Skagway, and Juneau, as well as the Juneau Economic Development Council, the Skagway Development Corporation, and the Kenai Peninsula Economic Development District.

In the course of the program, Nevelsk began marketing its unique natural, historical, and recreational resources, and the result was an increased number of visitors to the city. Bolshoy Kamen created a business incubator that helped the city become self-sustaining to prepare for the day when it ceases to have the federal subsidies that come with its "closed city" status.

Financial Viability

Sound financial management and budgeting are also fundamental to a municipality's long-term sustainability and success. ICMA International has worked to foster changes in financial policies and improvements in financial management practices.

Improved Budgeting in Indonesia. In Indonesia, ICMA helped local governments in nine provinces develop performance-based budgets reflective of community priorities, create timely and accurate financial and performance reporting systems, improve the stewardship of public assets, and transparently and responsibly meet financial obligations.

ICMA also helped build sustainable revenue streams, develop internal controls and financial audits, evaluate the implementation of performance-based budgeting in relation to the annual strategic plan, and improve oversight of the budget and the performance of local agencies.

As a result, more than 40 local governments began implementing performance-based budgets and holding regular public hearings to engage residents in their budget processes. And all nine provinces achieved across-the-board improvements in average outcome measures as assessed before and after the program: planning and budgeting, accounting and reporting, and asset management.

Improved Creditworthiness in Latin America. In Mexico, Costa Rica, and Argentina, ICMA Latinoamérica helped local and state-level jurisdictions and authorities take steps to increase their ability to borrow at reasonable interest rates.

The Regional Credit Rating Improvement Program paired eight Latin American jurisdictions with municipal finance experts from Phoenix, Arizona; El Paso, Texas; Burlingame, California; Santa Fe County, New Mexico; and the Genesee County Road Commission, Flint, Michigan.

The U.S partners helped their counterparts review the factors that affect their creditworthiness and design plans for improvement. This program was made possible by a grant from the World Bank through the Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility.

Two of the Mexican jurisdictions were able to obtain credit for infrastructure projects based on their sound financial conditions in a year when many Mexican entities had their credit ratings lowered. Several others were on the verge of issuing bonds at the program's end.

A Practitioner's Guide to Improve Local Authority Creditworthiness, in both Spanish and English, will help ensure that improvements can be sustained.

Social Sustainability

Social sustainability rests on many factors: a stable political environment, public involvement in local decisions that affect people's lives, the availability of jobs, an environment where people feel safe, and public services that provide for quality of life.

Stability in Conflict and Postconflict Areas. Social sustainability is particularly critical in conflict and postconflict countries, and ICMA has worked in Iraq and Afghanistan to provide a foundation for stability. In Iraq, ICMA provided facilitation training to local trainers, who in turn helped municipal council members and community action groups develop the skills they needed to obtain resident input, prioritize municipal projects and activities, and advocate successfully for funding from the national government.

In Afghanistan, ICMA has worked "under the radar" through local municipal offices, putting in place small steps that will increase residents' participation in their local governments and enable Afghan municipal officials to provide reliable services and gain the confidence of residents:

- Sports events, internship opportunities, and other activities encouraged young people to stay in their home communities, resist recruitment by radical forces, and eventually come to view public service as a potential career.
- Children in Khost were able to return to school when water service was restored to the city.
- ICMA built a park that provided children in Kabul with a safe place to learn about traffic from a driver's point of view, using pedal-powered "cars."
- Students, professors, and community members came together as volunteers to clean up the campus of Nangarhar University in Jalalabad—the first cleanup of the campus in three decades.

Violence Prevention. Starting in 2009, ICMA has applied and adapted U.S.-based expertise in community-based public safety to the needs of five cities in Panama and El Salvador—two Central American countries that have experienced significant crime and violence.

The program has engaged multiple stakeholders there—national and local government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, police, and representatives of the private sector and religious and youth groups—and partnered them with professionals from the sheriff's department in Pinellas County, Florida, and police departments in Arlington, Texas, and Santa Ana, California. These U.S. departments all have exemplary community-oriented policing programs.

In another program, *Alcance Positivo*, ICMA is providing assistance to the Child and Adolescent Unit of the national police in Panama as they develop community- and school-oriented initiatives for youth at risk. The Central American partners in both programs have begun to adopt practices that bring police together with other community members, based on models they learned about during exchange visits.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability is at the core of concerns about climate change, industrial pollution, water supply protection, and management of natural resources. Local governments around the world are realizing the need to address systemic, and often severe, urban environmental problems if cities are to continue contributing to sustained economic development in the 21st century.

ICMA SUPPORTED THE CREATION OF MORE THAN 4,000 JOBS IN **BULGARIA** THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

ICMA has shared the expertise of U.S.-based professionals with cities around the world that face challenges involving water, wastewater, solid waste management, and pollution control:

Climate Mitigation and Adaptation. On behalf of the U.S. Department of State, ICMA arranged exchange visits that provided an opportunity for local government professionals from China, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States to learn how other cities are implementing climate mitigation and other programs that promote sustainability.

Methane Gas Recovery. Through a public-private methane-to-markets partnership supported by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, ICMA facilitated the exchange of best practices in recovery of landfill gas for use as a clean energy source in Changsha, China. The program, which included a workshop, landfill tour, and peer assistance, was designed to share practices developed in the United States. It delivered resources about landfill gas capture systems, management issues and techniques, and financing methods.

Hazardous Waste Management. In Jordan, ICMA partnered a Jordanian university with one in the United States to develop medical waste management practices that could be sustained locally and replicated throughout the country. ICMA received additional funding to help Jordan's government limit the environmental and public health risks posed by waste from households and businesses as well as hospitals.

Flood Mitigation. The United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) selected ICMA to assist flood-prone communities in Guatemala by assessing their disaster readiness and developing a training and exercise program. ICMA conducted focus groups with key stakeholders to identify gaps in information and knowledge, prepared an assessment, and developed a training guide in English and Spanish.

Solid Waste Management. Through a CityLinks partnership, Catawba County, North Carolina, worked with the city of Tirana, Albania, to improve the operations and maintenance of the local landfill, contract with private companies for waste collection, improve waste containers to reduce spillover, and develop a recycling program. The physical changes were complemented by a public awareness campaign to gain support from citizens and contractors, with a kickoff cleanup day.

These are just a few of ICMA's international programs that have contributed to the development of sustainable communities around the world. For full program descriptions and additional examples, visit icma.org/inter. PM

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BY LINDSEY MAHONEY

LEADING BY EXAMPLE: START WITH YOUR INTERNAL SUSTAINABILITY

Make sustainability part of your organizational culture

When addressing sustainability, a local government may look first to its internal operations. Are we, as members of a task force examining the internal sustainability of its operations, acting as a role model for sustainable practices ourselves? What more can be done?

In 2007, Sedgwick County, located in south-central Kansas, began exploring these issues, which resulted in the creation of the county's sustainability task force. During the past four years, the task force has worked to improve the county's organizational sustainability. Here is a discussion of the measures that can be taken to promote sustainability within internal operations.

Define sustainability so that it is understandable to employees. It's hard for employees to support a concept they don't understand. Some employees will have had little to no exposure to sustainability. Start simple.

Sedgwick County started by first defining what sustainability meant for the county and next how to consider sustainability in decision making.

The county chose an approach that considers four factors: environmental protection, economic development, social equity, and institutional and financial viability. This method helped align sustainability with other values that were already used in county decision-making processes.

Make sustainability a part of the organizational culture. Changing existing practices can be a daunting task. In Sedgwick County, the task force chose to focus on incorporating sustainability into current practices for making important decisions. Incorporating sustainability into the management model—the county's plan for how to strategically manage and supervise—was a first step.

Sustainability was also incorporated into the budget process so that departments considered the sustainability impact of a project when submitting budget or capital improvement program requests.

Educating new employees was another challenge, so sustainability was added to the curriculum for the new-employee orientation. Now, along with hearing about benefits and policies, new employees learn the meaning of sustainability and participate in an interactive activity that explores the four factors.

Choose a multifaceted approach to education. Creating culture change requires employees to build new habits and change existing practices to be more in alignment with the values of sustainability. Some changes start small by including tips in the weekly newsletter or management message, so employees can begin to understand the positive impact of sustainability efforts.

Along with weekly tips, employees can be provided with resources to encourage further growth. For two years in a row, Sedgwick County hosted a sustainability fair for employees as part of employee in-service activities on Columbus Day. This, along with a Sustainability 101 training course and a sustainability resource site on its internal website, helped create additional opportunities for employees seeking to expand their knowledge.

Establish a baseline. Identifying areas for improvement and assessing progress are ongoing processes. Since 2007, the sustainability task force has conducted annual surveys of employees in order to assess growth and identify areas for improvements.

Survey data has also been used to assess the effectiveness of current initiatives and if initiatives are being sufficiently promoted. Data was used, for example, to analyze what percent of employees carpooled to meetings in the past year (30 percent), what percent were aware of paper reduction initia-

LIKE MAKING ANY OTHER CULTURE CHANGE, IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABILITY INTO AN ORGANIZATION'S PROCESSES CAN TAKE TIME AND REQUIRES CAREFUL EXAMINATION OF CURRENT PRACTICES. BY IDENTIFYING CHAMPIONS WITHIN EACH PROGRAM AREA AND HELPING TO ENCOURAGE AND REWARD CREATIVITY, CHANGE CAN HAPPEN STEP-BY-STEP.

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BY SUSAN CONBERE

GETTING TO SMART GROWTH: TOOLS FOR MANAGERS

Better results lead to a better quality of life

Local government officials in the United States who are interested in environmentally and economically sound growth attended the New Partners for Smart Growth Conference in San Diego, California, during February 2012. Officials at the conference attested that creating a development plan that a community can support, finding the funding, and then implementing the plan are formidable challenges, but the results are worth the effort.

Growth that makes the most of a town's special assets and reflects the desires of the people who live and work there strengthens the economy and the sense of community and leads to a better quality of life.

Here are some of the lessons shared by public officials from communities big and small:

Involve your community from the get-go. Getting public input on community plans helps build public support, which can be important when projects are competing against other budget priorities. Visioning sessions using maps, building blocks, computerized images, and real-life props to show residents how their streets and neighborhoods can look help make the possibilities concrete.

One community blocked off a real street; used tape to mark off new street lines, potted plants to illustrate trees, and a stop sign to show changes in traffic patterns; then invited the community in to comment.

Involve all the community, not just the usual players. Business, youth, elderly, minorities, and disabled all need a voice at the table. Try holding listening sessions in the evening or on weekends at community centers, schools, assisted living facilities, and places of worship. Share information at community fairs, farmers markets, and other local events. A "pizza, beer, and transit" meeting was a big hit in one town.

Reach out in traditional ways, but extend your efforts using social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. Translate materials for residents who don't speak English. Include translators and interpreters for the deaf.

Success breeds success. If funding is limited, start with one high-visibility project that starts the ball rolling. The small town of Lake Village, Arkansas, restored its historic town hall. The restored building brought all of the town's agencies under one roof, cutting the cost of renting and equipping multiple offices, and the new town hall became a center for community activity. The building was such a success, it attracted significant private sector investment to renovate other buildings nearby.

Create new partnerships. One initiative that can help is the Partnership for Sustainable Communities. A collaboration of Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Housing and Urban Development, and Department of Transportation, the partnership coordinates federal investments in infrastructure, facilities, and technical assistance to help communities get better results from their investments in growth and development. Visit www.sustainablecommunities.gov to quickly access grant and technical assistance opportunities and other resources from the three agencies.

Beyond federal, state, and local governments, look for help from foundations (particularly local foundations), community groups, businesses, and such associations as the National Association of Development Organizations.

Take advantage of tools and technical assistance. Every community wants funding, but in these challenging times, many grant programs have been cut back or eliminated. Don't overlook other forms of assistance that can help your community find its path to a more sustainable future.

Here are ideas from EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities, online at www.epa.gov/smartgrowth:

Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities. EPA and private sector experts provide targeted technical assistance to help communities implement such smart growth tools as walkability assessments and parking audits.

Smart Growth Implementation Assistance. National experts provide technical assistance for policy analysis (for example, reviewing state and local codes and transportation policies) or public participatory processes (for example, visioning and design workshops).

Greening America's Capitals. A design team produces schematic designs for revitalizing a neighborhood in a capital city.

Governors' Institute on Community Design. National experts provide technical assistance on a growth and development issue to a governor and the governor's policy advisers.

Smart Growth Tools. Many tools are available, including a water quality scorecard, a mixed-use trip generation model, and dozens of publications with case studies, best practices, and lessons learned. PM

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BY LAURA GODDEERIS

CULTIVATING THRIVING COMMUNITIES THROUGH FOOD SYSTEMS

Motivations and opportunities for local governments

As part of their sustainability efforts, local governments are increasingly looking to programs and policies that support local and regional food systems. Although the term "food system"—referring to the stakeholders, processes, and linkages necessary to take food from the farm to your plate—may not yet resonate with you, it is likely that activities involved in developing a more locally integrated system align with such familiar community priorities as resiliency, entrepreneurship, or place making.

Resiliency. In the face of climate change, which is currently coupled with economic anxiety, people in communities and regions of the country have begun to ask where exactly their food comes from. Could we produce and purchase more of it closer to home, at a reduced cost to the environment, and keep more dollars in the region?

If you factor in additional concerns over inequitable access to healthy food in both urban and rural areas, shrinking household budgets, and high incidence of diet-related disease, the security of all community residents comes into question. Universities, regional planning authorities, and other community-based organizations are keen to partner with local governments on food system assessments to explore these questions and potential interventions.

For examples of comprehensive food systems assessment and planning efforts, check these websites: Delaware Valley, Pennsylvania (Philadelphia region; www.dvrpc.org/food); Erie County, New York (http://intersight.ap.buffalo.edu/?p=865); and Oakland, California (www.oaklandfood.org/home/resources).

Entrepreneurship. In response to an aging farmer population, increased demand for local food, and barriers to entry for prospective new farmers, North Carolina local governments were recently invited to apply for a new statewide program.

Through the Center for Environmental Farming Systems' Incubator Farm Project, www.cefs.ncsu.edu/whatwedo/foodsystems/incubatorfarmproject.html), public land will be developed into five to six production sites that could be said to be cultivating—in addition to fresh, local produce—new farm entrepreneurs.

Instead of traditional lease agreements, the new farmers will compensate for the land access through donations from their harvests or other forms of community service.

Related examples of culinary or kitchen incubators to support small-scale food processing entrepreneurs can be found across the country. The Agricultural Marketing Resource Center at Iowa State University (www.agmrc.org/markets__industries/food/kitchen_incubators.cfm) provides links to a sampling of resources.

Place making. Food-oriented sites can serve as vibrant nexuses of community activity, whether they take the form of community gardens, weekly farmers markets, or permanent market districts. These sites can transform brownfields or other vacant parcels into thriving, safe places for residents to gather and access fresh, local foods.

Local governments encourage these sites through tailored zoning ordinances or permitting processes, land or water access, or direct investments in the form of, for example, Community Development Block Grant dollars through statewide or local programs.

Communities undertaking comprehensive planning, sustainability planning, or other types of major planning processes may also want to incorporate their local food resources and priorities into these visions.

See the recent policy brief "Planning to Eat: Innovative Local Government Plans and Policies to Build Healthy Food Systems in the United States" (www.farmlandinfo.org/farmland_preservation_laws/index.cfm?function=article_view&articleID=39040) for numerous examples of the above strategies.

Getting Started. Local governments beginning to consider opportunities for food system development in support of sustainability or other goals should think creatively and comprehensively about how food systems intersect with existing programs, policies, funding sources, and stakeholder relationships.

It may be helpful to review a comprehensive resolution, including the 2008 Seattle City Council resolution (31019) (www.seattle.gov/council/conlin/food_initiative) or the 2009 San Francisco executive directive (www.sfgov3.org/ftp/uploadedfiles/sffood/policy_reports/MayorNewsomExecutiveDirectiveonHealthySustainableFood.pdf), for examples of how traditional departments could be encouraged to incorporate food into their goals.

At the federal level, a growing range of agencies is interested in aspects of food system development. The Department of Agriculture is a traditional resource, but programs administered through Housing and Urban Development, Health and Human Services, the Treasury, the

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BY KAYLA PLATT AND CAROLINE JUDY

REGIONAL RENEWABLE ENERGY PROCUREMENT

Power through partnerships

Many of us in local government have been talking about regional partnerships as a way of reducing the cost of services, but are we really willing to "walk the talk"? Cities and counties that try to collaborate often run into challenges with governance or legal requirements. Or the agencies simply run out of energy and enthusiasm before results can be delivered.

Yet quietly and often successfully, there is one area of local government where collaboration is working: procurement. While many communities partner to piggyback off of each other's procurement contracts for goods and services, Alameda County, California, is using a model of collaborative procurement to help other public agencies develop renewable energy projects on public facilities.

Under the Regional Renewable Energy Procurement Project (R-REP), the county is leading the procurement process for 20 to 30 participating Bay Area agencies in Alameda, Contra Costa, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties. The R-REP is projected to include more than 190 sites for a total of up to 50 megawatts of power. A technical adviser will then group these sites into bid bundles based upon type of technology, size, location, and site characteristics.

In addition to lowering energy costs for participating agencies and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the regional economy will also get a boost, as renewable energy projects are initiated simultaneously. The R-REP is projected to generate more than 600 jobs and $200 million in economic activity.

Alameda County is directing the procurement in partnership with two regional public/private entities. To date, the group has focused on outreach and education to encourage participation. The next step for participating agencies is to complete professional site assessments to determine the feasibility of each project. Issuance of a request for proposal is planned for fall 2012.

This project is an expansion of the Silicon Valley Collaborative Renewable Energy Procurement Project (SV-REP), under which nine Bay Area public agencies in two counties developed solar projects at 70 sites. Through collaboration, these agencies were able to:

- Conserve funds and staff time (saved 75 to 90 percent in administrative costs and time).
- Achieve volume discounts and receive competitive bids (prices were 10 to 15 percent lower than going it alone).
- Benefit from standardized procurement documents and process.
- Receive competitive bids for individual sites that might otherwise not have been attractive to vendors.
- Accelerate deployment of projects.
- Use experiences within the collaboration through the procurement process.

Keys to Success: Commitment and Guidance

Following a best practice model developed by key SV-REP stakeholders has contributed to the success of the R-REP. This step-by-step model for collaborative procurement is defined in *Purchasing Power: Best Practices Guide to Collaborative Solar Procurement* (www.jointventure.org/purchasingpower), which was published after the conclusion of the SV-REP. This publication provides valuable guidance to any agency interested in collaborative procurement.

Marketing the initiative and attracting interest among agencies was made easier by pointing to the success of this model in saving the SV-REP participants time and money. More than 95 percent of the SV-REP projects have been completed to date, and the remaining projects are in progress.

There is also continuity between the R-REP and the SV-REP. Joint Venture Silicon Valley Network, a nonprofit organization based in San Jose, functioned as the convener in the SV-REP and is performing the same function in the larger, regional project.

A regional collaboration requires many champions. A partnership was originally formed between Alameda County, as lead agency, and Joint Venture Silicon Valley Network, as project convener. To expand the project to a regional effort, the Contra Costa Economic Partnership was engaged as a second convener. These two trusted, nonprofit organizations lend credibility to the project and play an important role in performing outreach to agencies in their respective geographic areas.

The commitment of senior-level staff at the lead agency and adequate time devoted to the project by other lead agency staff is critical. A champion at each participating agency is necessary too. For these individuals, the benefits of collaboration extend beyond saving time and money. They receive support from the lead agency, conveners, and technical advisers to navigate the complexities of renewable energy procurement and to assist with obtaining buy-in from key decision-makers within their own organizations.

Another recommended best practice for a collaboration of this size is to form a leadership team with representatives from outside agencies and individuals with

Continued on page 26

Leading by Example, continued from page 22

tives (97 percent) and what percent reduced paper usage in the past year (88 percent).

We also learned that some initiatives needed more marketing and publicity to ensure all employees were aware of them.

In 2011, the county found that 83 percent of employees indicated an understanding of the concept of sustainability (up from 38 percent in 2007), and 80 percent reported factoring sustainability into their workplace decision making (up from 57 percent in 2007).

Remember sustainability is more than just being green. Especially in challenging financial times, it can be important to remember that sustainability is about making good decisions, both now and for future generations. Focusing on the financial, social, and economic impact of a project can help to create buy-in from those who may not be sold on a project from just its environmental benefit.

In 2011, for example, Sedgwick County chose to undergo an energy audit and a $1.3 million contract for energy conservation improvements to county-owned facilities. Although the environmental benefit of this project was clearly valuable, it was the financial savings of a guaranteed payback by reduced energy use within six years or less and ongoing savings thereafter that helped the project move forward during tight financial times.

Challenge employees to make positive change. Employees become excited when their ideas are recognized and rewarded. The county's sustainability task force, for example, learned that some good ideas were not being implemented or were being postponed because of budget constraints.

As a result, the task force recommended development of a "Sustainability Challenge" that was open to all employees. Through this challenge, employees and departments could submit applications for innovative projects that would improve organizational sustainability.

Selected projects are awarded funding through a sustainability contingency fund, similar to a grant program, which helps departments implement new sustainability initiatives. The challenge also recognizes winners, helping projects to become examples for others.

To date, the challenge has awarded funding to eight projects and is entering its third year. Selected projects have included the purchase of diagnostic tools to help the facilities department identify leaks and energy loss, scanning of personnel files to convert to an electronic records management system that reduces paper and storage space, and an e-learning training system that complements the existing training curriculum by adding opportunities for round-the-clock training, thus benefiting all shifts and reducing mileage and travel expenditures.

Be patient. Remember that change does not happen overnight. Like making any other culture change, implementing sustainability into an organization's processes can take time and requires careful examination of current practices. By identifying champions within each program area and helping to encourage and reward creativity, change can happen step-by-step.

Whether those changes are reducing energy use or creating time and labor efficiencies, each improvement helps keep us moving on the continuum of becoming a better model and leader for sustainability. PM

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Food Systems, continued from page 24

Environmental Protection Agency, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (to name only a few) are currently funding food-related activities.

Finally, do not assume these efforts must start and end with your staff members. Partnerships and meaningful community engagement are critical to all of these activities. PM

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Regional Energy, continued from page 25

deep knowledge of the technical aspects of renewable energy projects. Convening such a group once a month has contributed immensely to the success of the R-REP.

Easily Replicated

The collaborative model for renewable energy procurement can easily be replicated by other regions. Its success has been proven not only by the SV-REP, but also by several other jurisdictions around the country that are using the model.

To start a collaborative, it takes only a motivated organization ready to engage others. In turn, participants will save time and money in the procurement process, and reduce both their operating costs and greenhouse gas emissions as a result of project development. The lead agency that makes the resource investment in the procurement process benefits from the collaborative as well.

Collaborative procurement is one way that local governments are changing the way we do the business of government. PM

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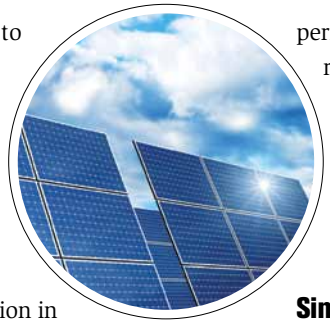
BY ANNA READ

SOLAR PERMITTING: REGIONAL COLLABORATION ADDRESSES COST

Local government legislation is being adopted

What if you want to install a solar system on your roof? You are likely to find the permitting process to be time-consuming and costly.



In fact, permitting costs, which include a wide variation in local permitting processes, permitting fees, and manual submittal of permitting documents, can add more than $2,500 in cost to a standard residential solar installation. And, while permitting processes for solar installations add costs to the projects, they do not improve safety.[1]

Reducing Costs

The U.S. Department of Energy has made addressing costs related to permitting one of the focus areas of its SunShot Initiative. Through the initiative, which is a collaborative national effort to reduce the cost of solar energy by about 75 percent before the end of the decade in order to make solar cost competitive with traditional energy sources, DOE is investing in research and development and is addressing nonhardware balance-of-system costs such as permitting.

Streamlining solar permitting within a jurisdiction and across a region can reduce the costs associated with permitting and help spur an increase in local solar installations—particularly residential and small-scale commercial rooftop photovoltaic installations. To streamline solar permitting processes, communities can simplify permit application forms and review processes, allow over-the-counter permitting for standard residential and small-scale commercial systems, and make information on permitting costs and processes available online.

Simplifying the Process

Communities that want to take another step toward simplifying the solar permitting process can switch from a flat-fee structure to a valuation-based fee structure that factors in the system size.[2]

Communities can also work with neighboring jurisdictions to standardize forms and fees, thus providing more clarity for solar installers, which, in turn, will allow them to produce more accurate estimates. In 2009, the Nassau and Suffolk County, New York, planning commissions and Long Island Power Authority (LIPA) launched the Long Island Unified Solar Permitting Initiative (LIUSPI). The goal of LIUSPI, which is the product of a collaborative process between stakeholders and municipal officials, is to "develop a mode process that could be used by all municipalities throughout Long Island to effectively and uniformly handle the application for and approval of residential solar electric and solar hot water systems in each respective jurisdiction."[3]

The new, unified permitting process under LIUSPI will apply to 80 percent of residential solar installations. As part of LIUSPI, jurisdictions will require waived or minimal application fees, expedited permits (within 14 days of submittal), and a new "Solar Energy Fast Track Permit Application" in place of existing permit forms.

Communities will create a registry of local solar installations and implement a new requirement of warning labels on the utility meter and AC disconnect switch.[4]

In September 2011, LIPA announced that it would provide implementation assistance to create incentives for townships and villages to adopt authorizing legislation on LIUSPI by the end of 2011. Townships received $15,000, and each of the first 10 villages to adopt ordinances in Nassau County and in Suffolk County received $5,000.

Local governments began adopting authorizing legislation in the fall of 2011. The town of Brookhaven approved the measure in mid-October and was followed by a number of other communities including Southampton, Riverhead, Shelter Island, and Port Jefferson Village.

To learn more about what communities across the country are doing related to solar, be sure to listen to the ICMA Center for Sustainable Communities podcasts, available in the documents library at icma.org/solarpodcasts. PM

ENDNOTES

1 SunRun, *The Impact of Local Permitting on the Cost of Solar Power: How a Federal Effort to Simplify Processes Can Make Solar Affordable for 50% of American Homes*, January 2011, www.sunrunhome.com/permitting.

2 U.S. Department of Energy, *Solar Powering Your Community: A Guide for Local Governments*, 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: DOE, January 2011), www4.eere.energy.gov/solar/sunshot/resource_center/resources/solar_powering_your_community_guide_local_governments.

3 "Nassau County and Suffolk County Planning Commissions and LIPA Launch New Unified Solar permit Initiative," press release, September 23, 2011, www.lipower.org/newscenter/pr/2011/092311-solar.html.

4 For more information on the specifics of the LIUSPI, see the Long Island Unified Solar Permitting Initiative document (LI Unified Solar Permit Initiative) available on the Long Island Solar Energy Industries Association (LISEIA) website: www.liseia.org/#/recent-news/4527335090.

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BY CRAIG MALIN, ICMA-CM

NEXT GENERATION SUSTAINABILITY

For the future, don't be constrained by the past

In a 2007 resolution, ICMA members affirmed their commitment to building sustainable communities, referencing the ancient Athenian Oath to "transmit this city, not only not less, but greater and more beautiful, than it was transmitted to us." Five years have passed, and the evidence strongly suggests we have not been successful, particularly with passing on what was provided to us, in some measure greater than we received it.

To whom, exactly, are we—local government managers—supposed to transmit the communities where we occupy leadership positions? Developers? Bankers? Property owners? The citizens who elect our bosses? The next city manager or county administrator who replaces us?

This is the rather mundane reality that too many in the profession accept. Although this approach may pay the bills, it is not the stuff of legend, worthy of an ancient oath that inspires a noble profession.

Our profession is more than that. Our profession comes with an obligation to truly, transformatively transmit the communities of which we are the stewards to a higher purpose. For clarity about why we are obliged to transmit our community, my suggestion is to visit a park, a school, or a juvenile detention center.

We work for kids.

While we respect and honor the past, we work for the future. Managers work for the next generation. We work to pass on our community's collective social capital, in ever-increasing increments, to those who haven't yet thought about voting or paying taxes.

We work for those who see the world as it can and should be, rather than how it is or was. We work for kids. When we do our jobs well, kids have more social capital and more opportunities for brighter, greater, and more beautiful futures. Plus, our communities prosper with personal, intergenerational sustainability.

Supposed to Be, But Isn't

That is how it is supposed to work, but it hasn't of late. The latest U.S. census data indicate 21.6 percent of American children live in poverty. America has more impoverished children today, 16.4 million, than it has ever had, and the number continues to rise in the postrecession era.

Of the 3,142 counties in the nation, 653 counties saw significant increases in poverty for children ages 5 to 17 from 2007 to 2010. Only eight counties saw a decrease. Childhood poverty, hunger, poor health, and social disconnection have lifelong consequences, constrain individual potential, and limit the success of nations and the communities within them.

Public education, that time-tested path from poverty, has been similarly hard-pressed. In 1970, America led the world in high school and college graduation. Today, we are 21st in high school completion and 15th in college completion. Every day, more than 7,200 high school students drop out.

For the class that entered high school in 2007, the national graduation rate stands at 68.8 percent. The typical high school dropout loses $260,000 in reduced earnings over a lifetime. Dropouts' aggregate, cumulative costs to communities and the nation in reduced earnings and in increased public expenses is crippling, with every four-year cohort of

IN THE DAILY EFFORT TO LEAD LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, DON'T BE WHOLLY CONSUMED BY THE MINUTIAE OF THE PRESENT. BY ALL MEANS, DON'T BE CONSTRAINED BY THE PAST. FOCUS ON THE FUTURE.

high school dropouts costing taxpayers a trillion dollars over their lifetimes.

If you think that poverty is the purview of priests and that education is the province of principals, you're wrong. Unmet social needs that compromise your community's future are your problem. They demand the community's full attention, and they require sustainable solutions founded on inclusive engagement and earnest, ethical, nonpartisan problem solving that is our profession's stock in trade.

All the green roofs, all the LED streetlights, and all the metallic flavors of LEED-certified buildings absolutely pale in comparison to a committed focus on building social capital for the next generation. That is sustainability.

Committed and Involved

Local government leaders need to break out of narrow, tradition-bound lanes, for the status quo of slow decline is, assuredly, not sustainable. We need to challenge mediocrity, confront inaction, and call out phrases like "the new normal" for what they are: weak-willed excuses of the comfortably lethargic.

We need to support partners wherever they may be found in pursuit of improving the lives of children as a fundamental, measurable community goal. We need to personally commit and be personally involved, both to have a tangibly informed perspective and to be credible in our unabashed expectation that everyone has a role to play in our community's brighter future.

We need to listen to children and empower them with our time and willing spirit. Children should be an integral part of community planning efforts. They should play a role on boards and commissions. They should review our operations, suggest changes, and expect that those suggestions be taken seriously. They should be encouraged to challenge us with their dreams as they inspire us with their pluck.

You should expect raised eyebrows from the cynical. You should expect push-back and even some sharp elbows from those who want you back in your narrow lane. But you should also expect success, as innovative ideas spring forth and transformative relationships are forged.

The fact is that community involvement works. Linking local and social services to schools works. Building collaboration among teachers, parents, and community members works. Making schools the center of a community's energy and progress works.

Involvement at the personal level also works. Mentors can cut illegal drug use and school truancy and dropout rates in half (Big Brothers Big Sisters, http://www.bbbs.org/site/c.9iILI3NGKhK6F/b.7721455/k.6CBF/Our_impact_on_education.htm) and reduce pregnancy rates for at-risk teens (Claire Brindis and Laura Davis, Linking Pregnancy Prevention to Youth Development, http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/storage/advfy/documents/communitiesresponding5.pdf). Taking responsibility for connecting kids to a brighter future works.

In the daily effort to lead local governments, don't be wholly consumed by the minutiae of the present. By all means, don't be constrained by the past. Focus on the future. The essence of sustainability is our children, well prepared to shape our future. PM

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BY MIKE CONDUFF, ICMA-CM

GOOD GOVERNANCE CAN BE SUSTAINABLE

10 ways to achieve sustainability in governance

In the three years since ICMA past president Michael Willis wrote the foreword for the book that author Jim Hunt, a 26-year elected official, and I wrote on the subject of sustainability—he termed it the "issue of our age"—much has changed.

In those days, we had to search pretty hard for actual working examples of what communities were doing to go green and save money, which was part of our criteria. Now it is much more the norm for local governments to have a "green committee" and to be pursuing all kinds of sustainable practices. Click on almost any local government website and you are likely to see a prominent link to sustainable leading practices.

Elsewhere in this month's special issue, authors comment on how competing departmental interests, reduced or disappearing grants, and even waning community interest in the face of difficult financial times have impacted the ability of local governments to invest in sustainable practices—even when the practices save money.

Encouragement Needed

Although all of this is true, the green issue is only one more in a long list of casualties caused by the proclivity of elected bodies to deal in the near time (what coauthor Jim Hunt calls the "not in my election year syndrome") and to listen to the vocal few rather than the more numerous people who are reluctant to engage.

As professional managers, we make our paramount interest the cities and counties we serve. For staff members, green was easy to embrace because it made financial and sustainable sense. If a community could invest—espe-

10 WAYS

TO SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE

Conversations with managers all over the country have led to a top-10 list in support of sustainable governance:

1. Create, with your current council if possible, a council process manual that includes values, behaviors, and expectations for elected officials; consider this manual the council's job description.

2. Keep your council educated; send members to conferences and state league and regional meetings–and go with them.

3. Conduct a council retreat at least annually, with succession planning as a topic.

4. Offer a citizen academy; teach the segment on the chief management official or chief administrative officer yourself.

5. Hold a council candidate orientation as soon as filing is over; provide a staff contact list for campaigning check-ins.

6. Hold a councilmember orientation for new members as soon as possible after elections; provide and review with them the council process manual.

7. Meet with each new member personally; give them tours of facilities and projects and orientations on key issues.

8. Meet with each member of the governing body regularly and in person; go to breakfast or lunch and personally pay for the meal if necessary.

9. Be visible in the community, and promote the image of the professional staff.

10. Stay current on leading practices; attend ICMA meetings as well as state and regional meetings for managers.

cially using other people's money—in energy-efficient lighting, equipment, operations, and practices and then pay that investment back through savings over time, it became a straightforward management exercise.

Unfortunately, the political arena often viewed this leading practice as a constituent issue. Elected officials often say, "My folks are more worried about getting lights on the soccer field than switching to LEDs." Or, "In this economy, my people just don't want to add more debt, even though the savings more than pay the debt service." These types of comments make advocating for sustainability a real challenge.

Also, Sustainable Governance

So if green is only another issue in a competing short-term view list, how can we encourage sustainable governance so that our view frame lengthens? At least part of the answer is summed up in Jim Collins's advice to think in terms of succession planning, not internally but politically.

This is essentially the equivalent of ICMA Senior Advisor Frank Benest's NextGen perspective for elected officials: Who are the community's next elected officials, and the next, and the next? Is there a training program for them?

Chambers of commerce do this. Almost every chamber has a leadership program; examples include Leadership Denton and Leadership Cincinnati. Do you have a citizen academy or local government 101 program to educate residents on the complexity of the local government, one of the largest economic engines in the community?

Is there an alumni program to provide support for subsequent groups of leaders and to keep potential council candidates engaged and knowledgeable? Are the current elected officials grooming their replacements and keeping them engaged?

If your community has term limits, it is often clear when turnover will occur. A year or two or even three is not too much time for elected officials to be out recruiting their potential successors.

Now, before the e-mails pile in to me or to ICMA's ethics director, please understand, I am *not* suggesting ICMA members need to be recruiting elected officials. I am recommending that you make it easy for others to do so from a crop of knowledgeable individuals. Are you doing all you can to make governing sustainable?

Just as one must plant before harvesting, you must start now to cultivate future effective elected officials. In the spirit of green, do it organically! PM

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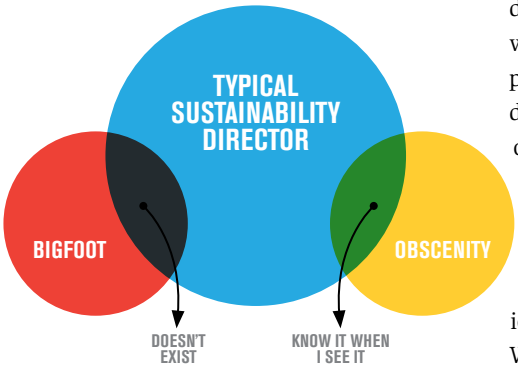
BY ANDREA FOX, SEAN MCLENDON, AND TYLER POULSON

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A LOCAL GOVERNMENT SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTOR

There is no such thing as a typical sustainability director

You may have seen some of the cheeky Venn diagrams dotting the Internet that describe such intellectual matters as "Early Beach Boy Hit Song Topics" or "Summer Clothing." This got us thinking—a sustainability director may be best described with a Venn diagram of our own:



Who Are We?

Much like Bigfoot, there is no such thing as a typical sustainability director. The very title of the sustainability honcho can range from director to officer to coordinator, and the position can be housed in various departments.

But, like an obscenity, we also know a sustainability director when we see one.

Our positions are often associated with the upper levels of management; we often have positional and personal influence and provide strategic insight on policy generation and civic engagement.

So, although our cubicles may not be the largest, we are often found in the local government manager's office or at least within earshot. This is a catbird seat, providing support on economic, environmental, and social issues like legislative preparedness, organizational alignment, strategic vision on municipal projects, grant writing, and a generous serving of resident outreach.

Duties like this necessitate our being jacks-of-all-trades. Over the course of a day we may find ourselves discussing the cleaning supplies used by building maintenance staff or the types of vehicles in the local fleet. Every single department makes day-to-day decisions with environmental and economic implications, and part of the sustainability director's job is to emphasize the impact of these decisions.

Adjectives that Work

A sustainable community may be better described by other terms: resilient, adaptive, creative, or innovative. Whether named or not, communities like this often have more stable economies, lower energy bills, healthier food, and a cleaner environment. In short, sustainable communities promote a higher quality of life for current residents as they also consider the needs and rights of future generations.

Truly sustainable communities will probably never be flashy places. If anything, they may remind you of how your grandmother ran her home—a healthy dose of warmth and welcome, good food, and an inscrutable sense of how to stretch a penny. And your grandmother's house probably didn't have the hippest of furniture and amenities. But these homes were built to last, and what was in them was treasured by more than one generation.

A well-run organization is a lot like that; built for the long haul and the benefit of multiple generations. Assessing decisions through a sustainability lens encourages holistic analysis and ensures the steady accrual of benefits over time.

Rating the Outcomes

Perhaps the most important requirement for ensuring the success of a sustainability director is a shared understanding of why sustainable outcomes are important. Once political leaders and local government staff have a common appreciation for the work involved in enhancing local quality of life and living responsibly, then forging ahead becomes a much more achievable task.

Whether a sustainability director is trying to raise funds or reorient an organization's leaders toward more sustainable thinking, effective communication skills are perhaps their greatest asset. The ability to convey the countless benefits of decision making through a sustainability lens can inspire local staff and community leaders to become champions for sustainability goals.

There is no doubt that one person couldn't have changed the course of the Titanic with a single row of a paddle; likewise, a sustainability director won't be able to advance ambitious environmental, economic, and community goals without a supportive crew and captain. Defining the requirements for what the position needs to be successful is perhaps best conveyed by two words: your support. PM

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