

Onondaga Citizens League

“Greening CNY” Steering Committee

May 12, 2009, 307 University College meeting notes

Present: Lisa Welch, Peter Arsenault, Lori Dietz, Sara Pesek, Emanuel Carter, Jason Allers, Karen Kitney, Greg Munno, Cal Bowne, Joe Ash, Megan Costa, Anastasia Urtz, Carol Charles, Khris Dodson, Megan Costa, David Holder, Sue Miller, Steve Kearney, Diane Brandlii, Sandra Barrett.

Sandra outlined the mission of the OCL and the process used to select and define the study topic. She explained that the study process includes public participation and discussion through vehicles such as presentations, panel discussions, blogs and newspaper coverage. The report resulting from the study should include specific recommendations for public policy change. In order to go beyond reports that “sit on the shelf”, in recent years OCL has tried to partner more with other organizations, or to design studies to inform other initiatives, in order to accomplish this goal.

Jason Allers, who chaired the study topic selection committee, said that in choosing the “green” topic, OCL wants to be part of creating a new atmosphere, and feels this is the right time to ask “What Does it Mean to be Green?” The board is concerned with how we can influence leaders, support economic development and help to keep people and attract people to the community.

Peter Arsenault outlined the [12 traits of Sustainable Communities](#) developed by [Greening USA](#), which is in the process of developing benchmarks for each of the traits, which encompass a broad definition of sustainability:

- Trait 1. Governmental Leadership by Executive, staff, and legislators
- Trait 2. Economic Development with diversified economic base
- Trait 3. Land Planning and Resource Management that is integrated, balanced, and diversified
- Trait 4. Transportation & Parking with numerous options
- Trait 5. Infrastructure Systems addressing long and short term
- Trait 6. Buildings and Housing are environmentally sensitive and energy efficient
- Trait 7. Energy Usage and Generation without fossil fuels
- Trait 8. Waste Material Management is holistic and value based
- Trait 9. Cultural Resources and Entertainment is well rounded and holistic
- Trait 10. Education of high quality including sustainability education
- Trait 11. Health and Safety based on clean, safe, healthy communities
- Trait 12. Community Involvement and participation by citizens

Sandra suggested that a presentation of the 12 Traits be part of a public study session. Because the OCL study must be more focused, we could not address such a broad spectrum, but recognition and understanding of the overall concept can be incorporated in the study.

The need to catalog current green activity in the community was recognized. [FOCUS Greater Syracuse's](#) effort to catalog green organizations was mentioned. Student assistance to the study committee is a possibility.

Sara Pesek suggested that the study include a comparison with other communities to provide a frame of reference for how well we are doing as a sustainable community. Jason suggested that we look at the [SDAT report](#) (AIA Sustainable Design Assessment Team) on Syracuse and progress on recommendations.

Greg Munno said we might be able to join forces with [CNY Speaks](#) in a series of public forums on the green topic, which will be the subject of the next CNY Speaks effort as well. Sara said that the EPA [Region II Environmental Finance Center](#), which she directs, can help to reach local government officials.

Karen Kitney suggested we look at basic policy choices such as extension of water lines that influence settlement patterns, and ask how we can influence towns and homebuilders. Emanuel suggested an approach that defines the regional ecosystem and includes not just green infrastructure and buildings, but a parcel-by-parcel approach to reducing our carbon footprint.

Megan Costa said that SOCPA is beginning to update the county's [2010 comprehensive plan](#) now, hoping to set policy on the extension of infrastructure, and in general how to grow, and how to grow well. Work has begun with trend analysis; a public education and input process will be developed and the OCL study could help to inform that process.

Anastasia Urtz recommended we look beyond the city to how rural areas relate to the urban core. There were several comments about the need to get the public and elected leaders to see the community as a whole, and to increase general community awareness of and support for sustainability so that leaders will be comfortable with embracing the concept.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, May 26, 4 – 5 PM, 307 University College.