Onondaga Citizens League
What does it mean to be Green? Study January 2010

Review of Sustainability and Green Organizations:

> **Resource Related Organizations**
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> Researched by Mary Jean Byrne-Maistro
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> 1. US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) www.epa.gov/
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> 2. Natural Step www.naturalstep.org
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> 3. Enterprise Green Communities http://www.greencommunitiesonline.org/
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> 4. Sustainable Communities Network
>   http://www.sustainable.org/information/guide.html
>
> 5. Sustainable Cities Network http://www.sustainablecitiesnet.com/

1) EPA

Organization Name and main address: EPA Environmental Protection Agency.
US Environmental Protection Agency
  1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
  Washington, DC 20460
  www.epa.gov

Organization Type: Government Organization. "EPA leads the nation's environmental science, research, education and assessment efforts. The mission of the Environmental Protection Agency is to protect human health and the environment. Since 1970, EPA has been working for a cleaner, healthier environment for the American people." (web site)

Organization's specific Program of interest to Sustainable Communities: There are Two: **Green Communities**: "...your portal to tools and information on the best strategies, programs and policies to reduce your environmental footprint." (web site) and **Smart Growth:** "The EPA smart growth program helps communities improve their development practices and get the type of development they want. We work with local, state, and national experts to discover and encourage successful, environmentally sensitive development strategies." (web site)

Who the program is intended for: Communities.

Basic summary of the program:" **Green Communities** is a web-based toolkit and planning guide designed to help communities access the tools and information to help them become more sustainable, Green Communities." The site states that this program is closely linked to their Smart Growth Program and provides links to that program.

A 5-step environmental planning framework leads you to a greener, sustainable future (web site). This program offers a five step template to help communities through the

process. Step 1: Community Assessment; (Where are we now?) Step 2: Trends Analysis (Where are we going?); Step 3: Vision Statement (Where do we want to be?) Step 4: Sustainable Action Plans (How do we get there?); Step 5: Implementation. Under Each Step it offers the following guidelines:

- [How To Get Started](#):
- [Tools](#): A list of tools and indicators and resources for measurement and analysis
- [Case Studies](#): Place to look for communities doing similar work
- [Publications](#)
- [Frequent Questions](#)

This is what the site suggests transpire during the community assessment phase, which echoes what we seem to be currently doing:

- A delineation of your planning area boundaries.
- An identification of community values.
- An inventory of natural and human-made features including sensitive areas and opportunities.
- An evaluation of economic conditions in your community.
- An evaluation of public facility and infrastructure capacity and effectiveness (e.g. wastewater treatment facilities).
- Linkages among social, economic and environmental issues.
- A way to compare your community with other communities.

For Step 2: Where are we going? the assessment allows community members to visualize their future if nothing is done to intervene. What can you expect if current patterns of land development, population change, natural resource consumption, and commercial and industrial activities continue? Are these trends sustainable?

For Step 3: Where do we want to be? Develop a Vision Statement from the preceding assessments. "The vision statement lays out a foundation for the action plans which will be developed in the next step, How Do We Get There?"

For Step 4: Developing an Action Plan and Step 5, How to Implement the Action Plan.

Smart Growth "The EPA smart growth program:

- Conducts research
- [Publishes reports and other publications](#)
- [Showcases outstanding communities](#)
- Works with communities through [grants](#) and [technical assistance](#)
- [Brings together diverse interests to encourage better growth and development](#)"

Elements of sustainability that the program addresses or measures: **Green Communities:**
In the assessment phase (Step 1), in the tools link it lists the following inventory areas for assessment with additional links for specifics on each topic area:
"**Natural Resources** which should be protected such as unique habitats, wetlands, drinking water sources, rivers, lakes, streams and other sensitive environmental features.
Cultural Resources and Recreational Facilities which contribute to the uniqueness of the community or support tourism

Public Facilities which contribute to the protection of human health and the environment such as solid waste, water treatment, and wastewater facilities.
Problem Areas which contribute to the protection of human health and the environment such as solid waste, water treatment, and wastewater facilities.
Historic Land Use patterns which have influenced growth and development in the community.
Social, Demographic & Economic Characteristics which are identified for making planning decisions and determining the impacts of planning decision making.
http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/policy.htm
Environmental Regulations and Policies in the Community are identified to determine if they are sufficient to safeguard the community and to identify new or amended regulations or policies that might be needed in the community.
Environmental Health includes becoming aware of environmental risks and factors within your community and learning how to reduce your personal and your family's exposure to these risks.

Each subsequent step in this program offers a tool kit that instructs how to achieve the tasks outlined for that step, following on the above categories.

Smart Growth: "...covers a range of development and conservation strategies that help protect our natural environment and make our communities more attractive, economically stronger, and more socially diverse."

What are participants obligated to if they adopt or use this program? These programs serve as resources and provide information and templates with recommendations and guidelines for achieving various goals, but do not seem to require a formal commitment from interested communities.

What are the intended outcomes of the program? The Goals of the Green Communities Program are:

- to promote innovative tools that encourage successful community-based environmental protection and sustainable community development.
- to establish partnerships with other organizations and agencies to help build community capacity and knowledge in order to create more livable communities.
- to provide technical assistance through the web-based toolkit. "

The EPA Smart Growth program does not seem to have specific goals, but means to serve as a resource to encourage communities to think differently about development strategies and provide tools and information to help them, as well as some funding.

2) NATURAL STEP

Organization Name and main address: The Natural Step.
 Sveavägen 98, 5th floor
SE-113 50 Stockholm, Sweden
Phone: + 46 8 789 29 00 Fax: + 46 8 789 29 39
Website: www.thenaturalstep.org Email: info[at]thenaturalstep[dot]org

Organization Type: NGO. Founded in 1989. "The Natural Step has been at the forefront of international research and dialogue about sustainable development. We have developed a proven, science based model that helps communities and businesses better understand and integrate environmental, social, and economic considerations. Founded in 1989 by Dr. Karl-Henrik Robèrt in Sweden, The Natural Step has grown to have offices in 11 countries and a list of partners that includes some of the world's leading brands.... The Natural Step is committed to researching the science of sustainability and linking it to real world applications." (web site)

Organization's specific Program of interest to Sustainable Communities: They offer training workshops called "Sustainability for Leaders" to give people core skills to facilitate making sustainable changes in academia, non profits, businesses and communities. They have a program called "Solutions for Communities":

Who the program is intended for: Anyone working within or with communities.

Basic summary of the program: "Since communities are complex and diverse systems with multiple stakeholders, there are often many interpretations of sustainability and very different ideas about how best to achieve it. The Natural Step provides a clear, compelling, science-based definition of sustainability and a strategic planning framework to help communities make smart decisions that will move them step-by-step towards a successful and sustainable future. Our planning framework is rooted in systems thinking, which helps our partners to understand how daily decisions impact the larger system in which we all live. (web site)

Elements of sustainability that the program addresses or measures: They have a list of their projects that seem to encompass myriad aspects of sustainability with an emphasis on Local. They use the Think Globally, Act Locally byline on their program page. Their emphasis is on helping participants develop a definition of sustainability based on science and research. Therefore, they do not initially offer a definition on their web site.

What are participants obligated to if they adopt or use this program? The program is free and does not stipulate obligations on the site.

What are the intended outcomes of the program? Real world application of the ideas of sustainabilty and to develop a science based definition of sustainability, train and provide leaders to implement sustainability programs in their businesses or communities, provide ongoing resources and research about effectiveness of programs and stay abreast of new information to be applied.

3) ENTERPRISE FOUNDATION

Organization Name and main address: (By clicking on a link for donations I found the main organizations website.) The main organization is the Enterprise Foundation which is an organization dedicated to creating good affordable housing and diverse communities. From their website: "Central to our mission is Enterprise's fundamental commitment to give people living in poverty an opportunity to move up and out. We believe that these opportunities are best provided in communities with a diverse mix of affordable and market housing options, access to jobs and social supports, and a strong commitment to the environment and civic participation." (http://www.enterprisecommunity.org)

Green Communities Initiative (Enterprise) is a program offered through the main organization:
10227 Wincopin Circle, Suite 500
Columbia, MD 21044
Telephone: 410.964.1230
www.greencommunitiesonline.org

Organization Type: National Non profit founded 20 years ago.

Organization's specific Program of interest to Sustainable Communities: Green Communities is the program. There are local programs in several states: Florida, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, San Francisco, Santa Fe.

Who the program is intended for: developers, investors, builders and residents of affordable housing.

Basic summary of the program: The program focuses on green building as a cornerstone of green communities. From their website: "Buildings and land use have profound effects on the environment, residents' health and the social fabric of our communities. Green or sustainable development is a holistic approach to creating healthier, more environmentally responsible communities.

"Enterprise's vision through Green Communities is to fundamentally transform the way we think about, design and build affordable homes. Green Communities is the first national green building program developed for affordable housing. We focus on the use of environmentally sustainable materials, reduction of negative environmental impacts and increased energy efficiency. And we emphasize designs and materials that safeguard the health of residents and locations that provide easy access to services and public transportation. Green Communities is designed to help developers, investors, builders and residents make the transition to a greener future for affordable housing. Created in consultation with some of the nation's leading environmental, public health and green building experts, we offer grants, loans, tax-credit equity, training and technical assistance to give developers and builders the resources they need to bring green projects to life."

This program has developed its criteria in conjunction with information from these other organizations:

- Natural Resources Defense Council
- American Institute of Architects
- American Planning Association
- National Center for Healthy Housing
- Southface Energy Institute
- Global Green USA
- Center for Maximum Potential Building Systems
- Experts associated with the US Green Building Council

The program offers *funding* opportunities through grants, tax equity credits, loans; *training* through online and real time workshops and conferences about incorporating green building methods, sustainability and affordable green housing; *public policy* advice; *resources* such as online templates, manuals and technical assistance; *criteria* with specifics and checklists to determine a project's ability to be classified green; *green*

certification for affordable housing; and a *carbon calculator* for individuals and organizations.

Elements of sustainability that the program addresses or measures:

The Green Criteria contains detailed information that addresses aspects of design, development and operations, such as:

- Integrated Design
- Site, Location and Neighborhood Fabric
- Site Improvements
- Water Conservation
- Energy Efficiency
- Materials Beneficial to the Environment
- Healthy Living Environment
- Operations and Maintenance

What are participants obligated to if they adopt or use this program? To meet the established green criteria outlined on the website. Projects may apply for certification through this organization with the following requirements:

- Certification is open to all entities engaged in the development of affordable housing. (Please note that Enterprise defines affordable housing as projects serving residents at or below 60% AMI for rental projects and at or below 80% AMI for for-sale projects).
- The development team must demonstrate their qualifications to successfully carry out the proposed project.
- Project teams submitting a request for certification may include, but are not limited to, participants in the Green Communities Carbon Offset Fund and affordable housing providers participating in local, state and/or federal green building programs.

There is a two-step review process for the certification. From the web site:

Step 1

- Project team completes online certification request form and submits additional documentation during the design phase, as plans and specs are being developed.
- Once all submittals required under Step 1 are complete, Enterprise will conduct an initial review of the materials and provide feedback on the submission as necessary.

Step 2

- Project team completes online final certification form within 60 days of construction completion.
- Enterprise conducts final review and determines whether project can be certified as meeting the Green Communities Criteria. Enterprise sends notification of certification to project contact via email within 30 days of receiving completed submission.

- Any project team submitting a request for certification to Enterprise may be subject to on-site verification by a third-party provider. Projects will be selected for on-site verification on a quarterly basis, using a random sampling approach based on the number of certification requests submitted in a given quarter. Enterprise will direct a consultant to conduct the on-site verification, monitor the consultant for quality assurance, and cover the costs to complete the verification.

What are the intended outcomes of the program? To improve public policy about green design in affordable housing, to educate both residents and builders about the benefits of living 'greener' with a reduced carbon footprint and other positive environmental habits and the real possibility of creating green affordable housing projects, and to retrofit or build green affordable housing.

4) Sustainable Communities Network

Organization Name and main address: Sustainable Communities Network.
http://www.sustainable.org Seems only to have an online address.

Organization Type: Non Profit, unsure if that also makes it an NGO. It is certainly not a governmental organization, but I could not tell if it was a private non profit or how it is organized.

Organization's specific Program of interest to Sustainable Communities:
From the web site under the "About Sustainable Communities" link:
Imagine what a safe, livable, healthy community might look like. Around the country citizens are coming together to create a vision of what their community might be and to develop steps toward making these visions come true. Alternatively called "healthy," livable" or sustainable communities, these efforts are integrative, inclusive and participatory. In many communities -- large and small, rural and urban -- issues are being addressed in an interconnected manner. They are demonstrating how innovative strategies can produce communities that are more environmentally sound, economically prosperous, and socially equitable.

This web site is really a resource base that offers a broad scope of information related to sustainability and creating more sustainable, livable or green communities rather than one specific program. The entire web site is a program for communities that want to become sustainable. The links it offers are: "Creating Community", "Smart Growth", "Protecting Natural Resources" "Growing a Sustainable Economy" "Governing Sustainably" and "Living Sustainably'.

It offers a plethora of resource links to technical information, toolkits, case studies and other places' projects, a huge resource list of organizations and research, links to finding out what is going on in your own community or state, green building resources, educational materials about environmental issues like Global Warming and individual actions people can take to live more sustainably.

From what I found, these are some specific offerings from this web site that may be useful for a community doing what we are doing:

- a link to a toolkit called "Placemaking: Tools for Community Action"
- their link "Creating Community", which offers this overview of the link on this site:

"A community must develop a vision in order to address sustainability. A community visioning process can often provide guidance for citizens who are unclear about a future course. This section identifies alternative approaches and resources that can assist the visioning process."
- Again, there is a Smart Growth link.

Who the program is intended for: "...for those who want to help make their communities more livable."

Basic summary of the program: See Above.

Elements of sustainability that the program addresses or measures: See Above

What are participants obligated to if they adopt or use this program? I couldn't find any specific criteria or one program on this site. As stated above, it is more of a broad based resource listing for anybody interesting in sustainable community work.

What are the intended outcomes of the program? "...communities that are more environmentally sound, economically prosperous, and socially equitable."

5) Sustainable Cities Network

Organization Name and main address: This network is based in Melbourne, Australia. It only has a web address: www.sustainablecitiesnet.com

Organization Type: Affiliated with the University of Melbourne. Nonprofit.

Organization's specific Program of interest to Sustainable Communities: A broad based online resource site that offers similar information to the sustainable communities network except it is focused on urban spaces: "**SustainableCitiesNet** is an on-line resource to showcase and inventory international environmental initiatives, models and resources on a city-scale that contribute to creating sustainable cities. The site also acts as a portal of communication and support to members of Sustainable Cities throughout the world."
It offers the following links: events, models, list of sustainable cities, research, movements, opinions, sustainable cities, visions, archives.

Clicking on the links did not offer the same spread of information that the sustainable communities site offered. The models link showed some activities in other places that may provide useful inspiration for sustainable community activites, but it was not much. The sustainable cities link offered some articles about sustainable cities, but no specific programs that I could see with a quick perusing of this link. Events offered everything from activist type environmental activities to workshops, but almost exclusively in Australia. The "List of Sustainable Cities" is self defined: "**Sustainable Cities** refers to cities around the world that are actively making changes to become more sustainable. By recognising the interest, motivations, models of these cities, we hope to encourage others to also make such changes. If you would like to tell the world about what your city is doing to achieve urban sustainability and would like to add your city to this Sustainable Cities list, please do so by making a post on the site. To do this, go to "How to use this site" and follow the prompts. See below for the complete list of Sustainable Cities.

Who the program is intended for: anybody interested in urban sustainability, individual citizens, to organizations and governments and municipalities.

Basic summary of the program: There is no program. This is more of a posting site where people can literally network and comb through the information to perhaps find other models or case studies that may be inspiring, useful or instructional for their own interests.

Elements of sustainability that the program addresses or measures: N/A

What are participants obligated to if they adopt or use this program? N/A

What are the intended outcomes of the program? A more environmentally, socially sustainable world??? (my words)