

City of Minneapolis
Request for Committee Action

To: Community Development & Regulatory Services
Date: 1/19/2016
Referral: N/A
From: City Coordinator's Office
Prepared by: Kelly Muellman, Sustainability Office
Presented by: Kelly Muellman, Sustainability Office
File type: Resolution
Subcategory: Staff Direction

Subject:

Minneapolis Green Zone Policy Work Plan and Task Force

Description:

The Sustainability Office is requesting a staff direction to work collaboratively with other departments, including but not limited to Community Planning and Economic Development, Health, Neighborhood and Community Relations and Public Works, to move forward with proposed Work Plan for the development of a City Green Zone Policy. Additionally, staff is requesting the approval of the attached Resolution to establish a Green Zone Policy Task Force.

Previous Actions:

- On June 28, 2013, the City Council adopted the Minneapolis Climate Action Plan, which identified developing a Green Zone initiative as a cross-cutting strategy under the Buildings and Energy chapter on page 15.
 - On March 7, 2014, the City Council adopted the Minneapolis Energy Pathways Study, which listed establishing a Green Zones pilot with key community leadership as a next step on Minneapolis Energy Pathways recommendations (page 24).
 - On March 7, 2014, the City Council adopted the Minneapolis Climate Action Plan Two-year (2014-2015) Priorities, which included developing a Green Zone initiative.
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Ward/Address:

All Wards

Background/Analysis:

With the adoption of the Minneapolis Climate Action Plan, the City committed to a set of strategies to meet its ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reductions. The first cross-cutting strategy listed in the Buildings & Energy chapter of the Climate Action Plan was “Develop a Green Zone Initiative.” The strategy reads:

“The Green Zone Initiative will create a city designation for neighborhoods or clusters of neighborhoods that face the cumulative impacts of environmental, social, political and economic vulnerability. A Green Zone is an environmental and economic development tool that targets new green infrastructure and retrofits to an area in a comprehensive manner. Green Zones could correspond with targeted housing and commercial retrofit campaigns, to increase energy efficiency or boost renewable energy installation. Areas

with Green Zone designation may better be positioned to access benefits offered by the city as well as state and federal agencies, ranging from targeted pollution reduction to increased funding opportunities.” (p.15)

Following on the heels of the Climate Action Plan, the City Council approved the Minneapolis Energy Pathways Study in March 2014, which also recommended the development of a Green Zone Initiative (p. 24). The Energy Pathways Study provided the following detail on Green Zones in the Appendix:

“Communities identified as Green Zones, after an extensive screening process, may collaborate with the City and partners to create a community-based vision for improved sustainability and environmental justice. This may include working with the City planning office in devising a plan and goals, allocating funds or staff to support such a program, or connecting targeted communities with programs that will train and employ local residents to do the work that is needed.” (p. A-81)

The inspiration behind the inclusion of a Green Zone initiative in the Climate Action Plan and Energy Pathways Study was to not only address sustainability and greenhouse gas emission reductions, but also to address equity. One of the City’s Values is equity, which is defined as “fair and just opportunities and outcomes for all people.” Equity will be a foundation of the development of the City’s Green Zone policy.

Green Zones Initiative Background Information

Over the past year, Sustainability staff have pulled together information on Green Zone initiatives developed and implemented in cities across the U.S., including Los Angeles, CA, Commerce, CA, Kansas City, MO, and Buffalo, NY. Sustainability staff interviewed key personnel from the agencies and organizations responsible for developing and implementing these Green Zones initiatives to learn about best practices and lessons learned.

Green Zone initiatives in California have been primarily driven by concerns of environmental health and justice. Strategies have included a regulatory focus, a resource focus and an engagement focus to improve business operations, improve air quality and buffer vulnerable communities.

Regulatory focus: Reduce existing pollution and improve land use decisions (e.g., increased environmental enforcement of business operations, modifying zoning and land use regulations to buffer sensitive uses)

Resource focus: Increased access to public and private funding for development & sustainability (e.g., identifying federal, state and local funding sources, such as SB535 – Cap & Trade revenues)

Engagement focus: Increased community participation and empowerment (e.g., hosting conversations between businesses and community members)

Green Zone initiatives in Kansas City and Buffalo have been driven by a desire to revitalize specific neighborhoods within the cities with sustainability and equity as foundations. The focus areas in these cities have included business operations improvements and land use, but also broader concerns, such as housing quality and affordability, job training and placement, local food and greening activities (e.g., community gardens and raingardens), and more. These programs have target significant investment from multiple arenas to one specific neighborhood to create transformative change in partnership with the local community.

Between July 2014 and July 2015, the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Climate & Health Program facilitated a health impact assessment (HIA) on the possible implementation of a Green Zone initiative in the Minneapolis Phillips community. Community based organizations in the community led the assessment of the potential impact of a Green Zone initiative on air quality,

housing, and equity, and came up with recommendations for a Minneapolis Green Zone initiative. Both the process MDH undertook to engage community members and the findings and recommendations from the HIA will be informative to the City's development of a Green Zone initiative.

On June 30 and August 4, Sustainability met with staff from the Health Department, Community Planning and Economic Development, Neighborhood and Community Relations, Finance and Property Services, and the Attorney's office, to hear a presentation from MDH on the Green Zone HIA and discuss the Green Zone work plan, Task Force participation, and level of staff involvement.

An effective Green Zone Policy will involve the programs and services provided by City departments beyond the Sustainability Office. The ability for those departments to modify, enhance, or target their programs and services for the Green Zone Policy depends on the level of resources dedicated to this project. Additionally, the Green Zone Policy should not duplicate efforts that are already happening across departments, but rather help coordinate and add value to those efforts. Recognizing these existing efforts and resource limitations, the Sustainability Office proposed narrowing the Scope of the Green Zone Policy to specifically target "green" and "sustainability" focused efforts, including but not necessarily limited to the following: energy efficiency and renewable energy, green amenities and tree canopy, air quality/pollutants (point-source and mobile emissions), and green jobs.

Green Zones Initiative Work Plan

The objective of this RCA is to direct staff to develop a Green Zone Policy that the City Council may adopt in Q1 2017. The Green Zone Policy work plan and timeline proposes to kick off in Quarter 1 2016 with the development of a community engagement plan that will be crafted with key community stakeholders. Between Quarter 1 2016 and Quarter 1 2017, Sustainability will facilitate a community-driven process to (1) define Green Zones and identify the Vision and Goals of a city-wide Green Zone Policy, (2) establish screening criteria for identifying areas that will be designated as Green Zones in the city, and (3) enumerate the programs, resources, and activities that will be targeted to designated Green Zones. The Green Zone work plan is attached to this RCA.

In addition to broad engagement of interested and affected stakeholders, the Green Zone initiative will be led by a Green Zone Policy Task Force comprised of community leaders (e.g., residents, businesses, environmental justice advocates, etc.) and City staff. The Resolution to approve the Task Force is included with this RCA.

Sustainability staff will report on progress to appropriate Council committees and present the draft Green Zone policy to Council in Quarter 1 2017.

Financial Review:

No financial impact.

Enter future budget impact

Attachments:

1. Green Zone Policy work plan/timeline
2. Green Zone Policy Task Force Resolution