

## Comprehensive Plan Forums: April-May 2007 Sustainability Notes

### April 28 Forum

*Question #1: Should green building practices, which emphasize resource conservation and waste reduction, be a city priority? What should be the city's role in promoting green building practices?*

- LEED standards should be required
- Use blank walls on buildings for green walls
- Sidewalk permeability
- City builds large buildings, we should lead (per living unit standards, square feet commercial)
- If public money or public owned = LEED; but not on private sector, because it would scare away private investment (but maybe low interest loans)
- City should promote densification
- More cooperation in private/public stormwater management

*Question #2: What should be the city's role in promoting alternative energy sources and encouraging energy conservation? What about natural resource conservation?*

- Allowing wind turbines
- Portland Plan: task force to follow Portland's plan for an economy without oil
- City should remove parking requirements in the zoning code
- Car sharing requirements in developments
- Natural day-lighting, natural ventilation
- Explore allowing biomass, and other facilities
- Water metering is good example (with enterprise fund) of allowing private market to regulate/encourage; use this as example with others
- Tie property taxes to # of trees on property, # of curb cuts, and % of impervious surfaces
- Don't discourage large buildings or density
- Vehicle fees a la London to control commuter congestion
- Streetcars! Bring them back and put it in the Comp Plan!!!
- Work against cultural bias against families downtown
- Can a zoning code regulate based on ecological footprint?
- How can we encourage conservation in a comp plan?
- Cul-de-sacs discourage bikes
- The grid system = sustainability

Main Ideas:

- Yes, green building practices are a priority. If we just do green roofs we failed. We need to connect more to the river, the greenway, and the surrounding community. We recommend education on sustainability.
- Zoning changes to allow more density and a transit plan to support large population growth that encourages sustainable growth and living.
- Global policy with energy cost driving centralized growth.
- Social responsibility must be brought into the discussion so that all income brackets of residential living space will be sustainable
- The city needs to cooperate with other branches of government and private utilities
- City should promote education to individual homeowners and rental properties. City should provide essential clearing house of information
- Public money and public buildings should include LEED standards.
- Private sector LEED standards should be encouraged, perhaps with low-income loans.
- Can zoning code regulate based on ecological footprint (health, safety, welfare)
- Support return of street cars
- City should remove parking requirements in zoning code

## May 1 Forum

*Question #1: Should green building practices, which emphasize resource conservation and waste reduction, be a city priority? What should be the city's role in promoting green building practices?*

- Need life cycle cost analysis; look at the big picture
- Assistance re: defraying upfront costs; available funding?
- Encourage City to evaluate every project; assess all impacting modalities re: carbon load; Addressing CO<sub>2</sub> should be a priority.
- Standards, requirements for municipal buildings, private dev projects w/ city funding, and assisting private developments that may or may not have city funding.
- B3 Guidelines for state-funded projects (comparable to LEED); how to encourage private development projects to build green.
- Encourage green building approaches for existing as well as new development projects e.g. encouraging/promoting energy audits for existing residential (St. Paul); whether to subsidize.
- Evaluate technology (e.g. solar panels, green roofs, etc.); City could play a role in assessing and making this information available to the general public. This information should be accessible via City's website or links to other websites e.g. directories; Information about capacity, specs re: consumer, resident, builders applications.
- Perhaps the most important role the City could play is in leading by example w/ its own buildings.
- Encourage better building/site orientation e.g. re: passive solar, roof lines, etc.
- Encourage rehab over demolition.
- Renewable energy/innovative technology: PV panels that double as roof shingles? Addressing challenges with wind power applications...

- City should initiate pilot projects: visible, promotional, highlight examples for the general public so folks can see what's possible. e.g. examples of renewable energy applications on different types of houses.
- Upfront marketing role; get everyone at the table and on board; recruit proactive business leaders; get early buy-in
- Provide easy access to green building info; build a basic understanding; need a better repository; take advantage of the “teachable moments;” Who are the distinct audiences for these “teachable moments?” Contractor, homeowner, etc.
- “One-stop shop” repository (including web links) of info that is applicable to this region.
- Opportunity for CPED/City to do a loan program to assist w/ upfront costs; how to structure and/or promote existing loan programs? Many people can't afford a large upfront outlay of \$.
- Role in convening business community and major employers to discuss ways they can contribute e.g. early buy-in from businesses on new regulations; pilot projects; what does the business community have to offer?
- Mayors' Green Manufacturing Initiative: encourage green technology manufacturers to locate in Minneapolis/St. Paul; living wage and family-supporting jobs.
- Benefits of steel roofs (longer life span)

*Question #2: What should be the city's role in promoting alternative energy sources and encouraging energy conservation? What about natural resource conservation?*

- Renewable energy for residential (e.g. wind power): potential issues w/ residential wind generation: noise, safety...
- Each neighborhood could develop renewable energy plan/distributed generation (e.g. biomass heat or electrical generation); may be cost-prohibitive on an individual basis; economies of scale at a block or neighborhood level. (e.g. Green Inst community solar project); added social aspect of neighborhoods working together.
- On-demand hot water heaters? State Energy Code and performance-based permitting (City Reg Services)
- Concept of solar readiness: e.g. solar hot water heating – established technology, structural load capacity on roof.
- Commercial buildings/development: make onsite energy production a requirement of doing business w/ the City? What are the potential tools and incentives?
  - FAR, density bonus
  - CO2/carbon assessment tool for evaluating buildings/projects
  - ...but, don't want to regulate too much or place too many restrictions
  - Use City's dominant position to promote comprehensive green building strategies/requirements w/ Met Council and State.
- Transportation
  - Promote ride-sharing on a broad scale e.g. Hour Car model; plug-in hybrid
  - Midtown Greenway (Minneapolis Public Works Dept maintains)
  - Ecologically sustainable landscaping within the urban fabric: need to figure out how to get around in green corridors e.g. MPRB – one of most attractive resources is the network of trails; need to green spaces that double as non-

motorized transportation corridors; City and MPRB need to agree on how to expand our public open spaces and also serve as transp corridors; Park Dedication Fee may be a tool to achieve this.

- Tension between onsite parking availability and landscaping reqs
- Getting people to reduce their commute by living near where they work.

*Question #3: What should individual property owners do to support the city's goals for sustainable growth?*

- Collective purchases w/ multiple homeowners to achieve economies of scale (via neighborhood groups)

Main Ideas:

- Prioritize addressing the climate crisis and reducing carbon; an important yardstick
- Evaluate the ecological footprint
- Encouraging reduction of energy demand
- Encourage renewable energy production
- Aggressive approach to outreach and education; identify the key “teachable moments”
- Determine a systematic approach to implementing education, regulations, incentives, etc.
- Research best practices and examples from other cities e.g. evaluation, requirements, incentives.
- Promoting alternative transportation infrastructure e.g. bike paths, commuter lanes; more place-making for bikes on streets.

## **May 17 Forum**

*Question #1: Should green building practices, which emphasize resource conservation and waste reduction, be a city priority? What should be the city's role in promoting green building practices?*

- YES, YES, YES.
- Concerned about the polluted river and lakes – green building practices are not a choice, it is imperative...it will help the city function more efficiently...not just saving the planet, but a means to reduce monetary cost...
- Sees the need for a connection between sustainability and local food systems (farmers markets, community garden space, opportunity to grow own food in a dense environment – balance)
- Building design should consider green space that fits the needs of the neighborhood and community.
- City must revisit zoning code, parking requirements should be reduced, the city should encourage the removal of parking lots. Parking is underutilized.
- City should look at parking lots in commercial nodes. How do we reduce their necessity? Boulevard trees need to be replaced when they are removed.
- City should also consider a balance, some parking is needed to mitigate negative impacts on the neighborhood.

- If the city is going to be desirable to live in, the city must embrace sustainability as a priority.
- Worried about businesses that are only being visited by people in automobiles.
- Neighborhoods should be looked at organically. Impervious surface maximums need to be considered. Land should not just be pervious but also green. Should be a city wide goal that integrates input from all departments (departments seem to have different goals – and these goals are enforced in a way that contradict each other). An example of this is the storm water run-off fee being applied unevenly. Systems should be in place to reward sustainable practices – should be easier than it is to pull permits for such things – consider reduced permit fees.
- Greening practices need to consider more than just new construction. We need to encourage and support the existing green model that is on the ground.
- City will not allow pervious pavers on your sidewalk.
- Incentives need to be given not just to major landowners, but to individuals throughout the city.

*Question #2: What should be the city's role in promoting alternative energy sources and encouraging energy conservation? What about natural resource conservation?*

- Tax incentives
- Alternative energy is new enough to be cost prohibitive for many people – when you purchase wind, solar, etc...there should be a sort of “gap” assistance to purchase
- Leverage a reduction in cost of materials through bulk purchasing power
- Homeowners could rent their roof space out for community serving photovoltaic cells
- Education
- Hennepin County has considered building a wind farm to power government buildings. The city should look to join this effort.
- Getting “off the grid” should be a goal
- Recycling water
- Photovoltaic cells (ability to return energy to the grid)
- Minimum opportunity for wind energy in the city
- Small things like changing light bulbs can have large impact
- Sustainability is an issue that covers all income levels – lower income areas cannot be left out
- How will these practices affect low income affordable housing opportunities throughout the city? Sustainability cannot be an excuse for developers to exclude affordable housing in development.
- The issue is metro and region wide (Hennepin County – Metro Council). The city needs to partner with other governmental bodies throughout the area. Sustainability does not stop at the city border. Taxes are imposed on taxpayers by more than just the city, other jurisdictions should be buying into this concept to make it effective.
- This must be a legislative agenda – City needs to be a voice in the statewide community to garner support for tax incentives.

- Using all waste products (example of dog waste in San Francisco) for sustainable energy practices.
- Creating housing that has an increased insulation rating (was done in Section 8 housing on the west bank in the 1980s)
- Recycling on the curb should be easier, separating recyclables can be confusing. Recycling goes into one bin at the plant, why do we separate it at the curb? Many suburbs allow you to put it all in one bag.
- Minneapolis should also add to the recycling list – increase the number of and kind of items that you can recycle
- How will the city partner with others on recycling toxic items? (batteries, computer hardware, etc..)
- Certain functions in the city are planning separately – the neighborhood level needs to be considered. The city is losing park services, libraries, schools – concerned about a regional model for these services (not sustainable or walkable). The city departments need to be brought to the table to make sure they are all looking toward reaching the same goal.
- If we want people to walk, residents must feel safe enough to do so. Police officers need to patrol the streets – out of their cars.
- People can also make the community safe by walking – economic development can drive how safe residents feel.
- Safety must be addressed at both ends.
- Once your neighborhood goes regional, what is there to keep people interested in the neighborhood level? What is going to keep people from leaving at that point? City needs to look forward in all aspects for this to work.
- Our density is low compared to New York City and Europe, most people do not prefer height...where appropriate housing density needs to be increased.
- Commercial corridors need to hold more housing density – is connected to the success of retail and commercial space in the corridor. Placing single family housing on commercial corridors is a wasteful practice. Density should be seen as a good thing, not a bad thing. How do we want our commercial corridors to look?
- Areas of the city should be de-piped and de-paved (reducing run-off – Milwaukee Avenue as an example). Switchbacks in Como are another example of reducing pavement.
- The city planning departments cannot translate what the prescribed density is on a given parcel. Developers tend to have a larger voice than the average citizen. Neighborhoods do not get the plans early enough in the process, residents may be more amenable to density by being brought in earlier in the process. Where do we draw the line for development intensity, should a domino effect apply? Areas that are not politically connected are getting the density – SW area of the city is not carrying the fair share of density.
- Rules and regulations are not clear (most things not set in stone) – city is ignoring regulations in some situations, thereby losing the trust of the community. Concern for the individual property owner should be considered.
- Special attention needs to be paid to community participation, especially with the changes to NRP. Energy of neighborhoods (people) is part of the sustainability

discussion. Neighborhood based initiatives need to be supported by the city (environmental coordinators).

*Question #3: What should individual property owners do to support the city's goals for sustainable growth?*

- Solar, geothermal, pervious surface, green roof, the list goes on...but how do we get them there? Incentives are imperative, as well as education.
- Are the motives different between individual property owners, landlords, renters? How do we address this difference?
- There is a sustainable limit...what is the sustainable growth?
- Greening, planting trees, run-off mitigation...
- Should be sustainability not sustainable growth – implies monetary influence – should consider the effect our actions have on future generations.
- Does sustainable growth mean I just don't complain about density? Or do I use mass transit more frequently, patronize local businesses, etc...
- What do we do collectively to address what we want vs. what we need?
- Social marketing should be considered (not Hummers, but butterfly gardens as a status symbol). There should be neighborhood ownership of local

Main Ideas:

- Sustainability needs to be addressed in a holistic way. All departments need to be working together from the same policy framework.
- Maintaining the integrity, viability, livability and identity of neighborhoods as a community can help in achieving the overarching goal of sustainability. It all boils down to quality of life in our neighborhoods.