



Buffalo Environmental Management Commission

Monthly Energy/Efficiency and Sustainability TIP SHEET April 2012

As part of its City Charter-defined mission to advise the Mayor and Common Council on environmental issues affecting the City, the Buffalo Environmental Management Commission submits a monthly "tip sheet" on a timely topic for information, review and consideration. This month's tip sheet showcases Burlington, VT Legacy Plan.

The City of Burlington Vermont has the nation's oldest sustainability plan, the Legacy Plan, and was one of the country's first cities to write a Climate Action Plan. The mission of the plan and the Legacy Steering Committee is to:

- Develop criteria, policies and procedures for sustainable programs;
- Develop and maintain updated Sustainability and Climate Action Plans;
- Coordinate and lead City's Green Team;
- Track, monitor, and report utility use and greenhouse gas emissions of city operations;
- Track, monitor, and report greenhouse gas emissions at the community level;
- Represent the City at key meetings;
- Identify and secure funding from outside sources (ex. Federal grants) for projects;
- Foster, develop, & launch projects in partnership with City Depts. and key stakeholders;
- Develop a multi-faceted communication strategy within the organization and the community to promote the City's efforts locally, statewide, and nationally to gain recognition; and,
- Track and report about sustainability programs underway on a regular basis through the City's performance management program.

Burlington's Division of Sustainability hosts an annual Town Meeting that celebrates the projects and work done over the year, while reviewing the goals and metrics set out in the Plan. During Town Meeting 2010, Legacy staff unveiled work on a Legacy 10 Year Report card. This report, based on the input of "sector specialists", included an initial ranking on work regarding the five chapters of the plan, and is available on-line. It will soon be supplemented with quantifiable data -- a final 10 Year Report Card version will be completed by July 2012.

In addition to the Town Meeting, where the Legacy staff and steering committee report on Legacy Plan successes and achievements, the annual commitments made by institutional members of the Steering Committee and City Departments are reviewed. Each year department heads are asked to go over the plan, commit to, and report back on, specific projects or actions that help realize the 2030 goals.

Several mechanisms are in place to ensure the Plan's continuance through leadership change. The Plan is a community driven, rather than government mandated, document. The Legacy Plan was written by the community and later ratified by the City Council. It is overseen by a diverse Steering Committee, representing non-profit, public, and private entities. These include the University of Vermont, Champlain College, the United Way, Business Association and Chamber of Commerce, and Fletcher Allen Health Care

The Legacy Project is funded in part through financial support from the City's key institutional players, and does not depend entirely on the City's political administration for support. These mechanisms have proven successful even during changes of administration. When the current mayor was elected, he expanded the capacity of the Legacy project by hiring a social equity and environmental specialist to help with Plan Coordination.

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Accomplishments to Date:

- Due to extensive and comprehensive energy conservation program, Burlington's energy consumption has not increased since the mid-1980s.
- Burlington has an extensive local food network system. At present, almost 8% of Burlington's food is grown within City limits. One key element of this food-related work is the Burlington School Food Program, a nationally recognized effort to provide healthy, local food to the City's school cafeterias.
- Burlington has the nation's oldest sustainability plan (the Legacy Plan) and one of the country's first cities to write a Climate Action Plan in the nation. The first plan was written and ratified in 2000. The City is currently updating this plan and has recently set new GHG emissions targets.
- Burlington has a Green Building Ordinance that applies to city funded buildings, commercial space and residential buildings.

If you have any comments or questions regarding the tip sheet please contact Dr. Joseph Gardella (Chair, BEMC) at gardella@buffalo.edu or Dennis Sutton (BEMC support staff) at dsutton@city-buffalo.com.

BEMC members are willing to promote implementation of these programs in the City of Buffalo. BEMC meets the third Wednesday of every month, 8:00 AM, 901 City Hall. The BEMC web site address is: http://www.ci.buffalo.ny.us/Home/CityServices/Environmental_Management_Commission