

Las Cruces 120 Day Plan for Sustainability Program

120-Day Plan for the City of Las Cruces Sustainability Program

The following is a list of projects that have thus far been identified as priorities for the new Sustainability Program for the remainder of the calendar year.

Establish a database of past, present, and future energy expenditures

Description: The need to generate savings in City operations is a core function of this position, as is the need to track progress toward that end. This action involves collecting data on expenditures for electricity, natural gas, transportation fuels, and any other energy sources, categorizing by point of use, and establishing consumption trends through time. This will enable us to directly evaluate the impacts of specific energy conservation strategies.

Partners: Fleet, Building Services, Finance, El Paso Electric

Initiation: Immediately

Completion: October 2009

Conduct energy audit of all City operations

Description: Energy efficiency is the most cost effective way for the City to lower both its expenses and its carbon footprint. The next step after compiling data on current energy use is to conduct an energy audit. An energy audit can identify where energy is being wasted, propose specific actions to reduce waste, and estimate the cost savings for each action relative to the cost of implementation. Certain aspects of the audit can be performed in house, while outside assistance may be available for certain other aspects at little or no up front cost.

Partners: All City departments (particularly Facilities)

Initiation: Immediately (scoping)

Completion: First Quarter 2010

Inventory greenhouse gas emissions for the City and broader community

Description: Global climate change is one of the most significant environmental threats we face. In recognition of this, the current and immediate past mayors have signed the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement, which commits the City to reducing greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs) to 7% below 1990 levels by 2012. However, a comprehensive inventory of GHG emissions has never been done for this community. Such an inventory is the first necessary step toward achieving the goals of the Agreement, or any other GHG reduction goal, and more importantly will aid in evaluating the environmental impact of many program actions.

Issues: A variety of calculators are available for this purpose, and some research will be required to determine the most appropriate tool for our situation.

Partners: All City departments, El Paso Electric, possibly ICLEI

Initiation: Immediately

Completion: December 2009

Implement a renewable energy financing district

Description: In spring 2009, Governor Richardson signed into law two bills that enable local governments to form renewable energy financing districts. Such districts would issue bonds to fund installation of small renewable energy systems on private property. The bonds would be paid for by an additional property tax assessment on participating properties. One advantage of such a financing mechanism is that the loan is attached to the property, rather than to the individual, so if a sale of the property occurs before the loan is paid off, the benefactor of the renewable energy takes over the payments. This would make renewable energy financially attractive to more property owners and help grow local installation businesses.

Issues: While we would not be the first local government in the nation to form such a district, the body of experience is limited, especially in New Mexico. Therefore, many technical and administrative details must still be worked out before an ordinance can be brought forward. The New Mexico Association of Counties is working on a model ordinance.

Partners: Doña Ana County (Assessor, Treasurer, Community Development), New Mexico Association of Counties

Initiation: Underway

Completion: Early 2010

Participate in Vision 2040 efforts

Description: Vision 2040 is a regional long range planning project that was a main focus of my previous position. Although I will transition out of the day to day activities related to the project, I will remain involved by reviewing drafts and offering policy advice regarding sustainable land use and transportation, as well as providing institutional memory to the project.

Partners: City and County Community Development, Peter J. Smith & Company, Inc.

Initiation: Underway

Completion: First half 2010

Monitor grant opportunities

Description: Recent state and federal legislative actions have made funding available for numerous activities related to energy, the environment, and green jobs, and the City has already applied for funding under many of these programs. I may be able to identify additional opportunities to pursue, and assist in grant writing. Also, when an energy audit and greenhouse gas inventory are complete, it will be easier to target specific actions that will yield the greatest financial or environmental benefit, and likely make applications more competitive. Items of particular interest are those that:

- leverage private investment to stimulate green job creation
- help low-income households control energy costs (i.e., weatherization programs)
- provide partial funding for City projects with high capital costs but demonstrable payback in energy savings over time

Issues: Identification and pursuit of grant opportunities may affect other priorities listed in this plan.

Partners: Office of Management & Budget, various state & federal agencies

Initiation: Underway

Completion: Ongoing

Begin building a public outreach program

Description: The sustainability program should have a strong public outreach component. Obviously, when programs are implemented that can benefit the broader community (such as a renewable energy finance district) we will need to publicize them. However, we should also facilitate a routine public discussion about sustainability in general, what residents and businesses can do to become more sustainable, and what the City is doing with regard to its own operations. We also should solicit input as to how we can further develop the sustainability program. The outreach program will include the following:

- a robust website that summarizes all aspects of the program
- a regular e-newsletter to subscribers
- regular presentations to community groups, businesses, and classes
- occasional citywide mailings (in utility bills and Community Connections)
- radio and television public service announcements, including on CLC-TV

Partners: Public Information Office, Utilities (especially Water Conservation Program), local media outlets

Initiation: October-November 2009

Completion: Ongoing

Initiate Development of a Sustainability Action Plan

Description: The items listed above may be acted upon (or at least initiated) immediately, but there is a much longer list of sustainability related actions that can be taken in 2010 and beyond. Such actions should be guided and prioritized by a Sustainability Action Plan, developed in consultation with the public and community stakeholder groups, and adopted by City Council. The plan should be consistent with and build upon the City's Strategic Plan and Vision 2040, both currently under development. In its initial stages, the new public outreach program will garner ideas for inclusion in the plan. The plan should:

- Identify programs for the City to pursue, both in its own operations and to encourage community-wide sustainability
- Establish targets or benchmarks by which success can be evaluated
- Establish cost estimates and identify potential funding sources where applicable
- Identify partners and timelines for near-term projects
- Be a living document, with an annual update and progress report

Partners: City Council, general public, various stakeholder groups

Initiation: October-November 2009

Completion: June 2010