

Onondaga Citizens League

“Greening CNY” Steering Committee Meeting Notes

May 26, 2009, 307 University College

Present: Peter Arsenaault, Lori Dietz, Jason Allers, Joe Ash, Megan Costa, Megan Costa, Steve Kearney, Diane Brandlii, Sandra Barrett.

The steering committee discussed various definitions of “green” and sustainable” including the generally accepted UN definition of sustainable development: “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” “Green” is thought of as a subset of sustainability – the environmental part of the economy, equity, environment triad. It was agreed that the focus of the study would be on the sustainability traits that have to do mostly with preserving resources.

It was decided that the question “WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE GREEN in CNY?” has broad appeal and might be acceptable as the ultimate title of the study report. The study could be organized around the idea of “what it means to be green” for different audiences – individuals/families, neighborhoods, business and organizations, municipalities. However, the key questions to be addressed would include:

- What are we doing? Is it enough? (An assessment; comparison to benchmarks)
- How can we be more GREEN in CNY? (look at other places, model practices)
- How do we make sure that the decisions we make have a beneficial effect on the environment?

The unstated assumption is that it is good to be green. Among the benefits of being green:

- Lengthen life span of the planet/reduce negative impacts on the environment
- Improve quality of life
- Improve health
- Increasing pride in community
- Increase property values
- Increase economic viability – save money; create green job market; create local green businesses
- Create demand for local green services, products

We began to list the areas we might cover in the study, using the ENVIRONMENTAL DEFINITION:

- Preserve and enhance natural resources: parks; green spaces; wetlands; green practices; farms
- Change energy usage to reduce impact on environment (produce “negawatts”): sources of energy, types of energy delivery; conservation; energy efficiency;
- Transportation: alternative fuels; more efficient cars; reduce VMT (land use and transportation planning, mass transit, complete streets – bikes and pedestrians); and mass transit to reduce impact on environment and improve quality of life
- Infrastructure networks: (in addition to transportation)Water; Wastewater; stormwater;
- Land Use Planning & decision-making – e.g. brownfield v. greenfield development; urban-suburban-rural
- Green Buildings and Housing and green parcels
- Waste recycling
- Economic development dimension?

Peter is working on the next piece of the Greening USA traits, the assessment tool. We will continue the discussion of defining the study, in 2 weeks, on Tuesday, June 9, 4 pm in 307 University College.