



Greenprint Akron

A Sustainability Plan for the City of Akron

Background

In August 2007, Akron's Mayor Don Plusquellic committed the City to develop the "Greenprint" for Akron, a new plan that would transform the City of Akron into a city of innovation once more to compete effectively in a world where there is increasing concern for the environment. Prior to this in 2005, while Mayor Plusquellic was president of the organization, the U.S. Conference of Mayors had unanimously endorsed a Climate Protection Agreement. Each mayor committed to reducing their city's greenhouse gas emissions to 7% below 1990 levels by the year 2012. However, the cities, including Akron, were not inventorying and tracking their progress. In June 2007 the Mayors signed a new agreement with urgency to their commitment. Mayor Plusquellic knew that now was the time to act as connections to recent funding through Congress made it easier for cities to reduce their energy dependence and promote greater energy efficiency. Furthermore, by making the City more efficient and environmentally friendly and encouraging businesses and citizens to participate, the Mayor saw Greenprint as a plan that would benefit the entire community.

Scope

In 2008, Affinity Consultants, Inc. (Affinity) was contacted by Keep Akron Beautiful to offer expertise in the development of the plan. The City had moved forward on some of the steps needed to lead towards a plan but had reached a point of impasse. Akron had chosen mission and vision statements for Greenprint and had developed Smart Action Areas within the City service departments.

1. Smart Energy and Emissions
2. Smart Water and Wastewater Management
3. Smart Materials and Waste Management
4. Smart Transit
5. Smart Development

6. Smart Conservation of Natural Resources
7. Smart Community Education and Promotion of Progress
8. Smart Green Jobs

Each Smart Action Area was working to develop goals, objectives, and action items for their departments. Additionally, the Green Ribbon Panel (comprised of the Smart Action Area Key Point Persons and other city officials) met regularly. However, the Smart Action Areas had been given little guidance or prioritization from Akron in terms of city-wide goals and the City had not developed a decision-making matrix that would facilitate the approval process. Affinity identified that the planning process lacked key primary components: strategy, direction, guiding principles, and city-endorsed goals.

Delivery

Affinity collaborated with Keep Akron Beautiful on the development of the missing key components. First, Akron committed to seven "Guiding Principles" that would establish the value core of Greenprint and offer strategy and direction for goal-setting.

1. Akron will reduce its climate change impact.
2. Akron will implement efficient waste management and waste reduction.
3. Akron will promote environmental literacy.
4. Akron will institute an environmentally, socially, and economically responsible purchasing program.
5. Akron will seek outside funding sources and maintain fiscal prudence.
6. Akron will promote and seek the development of green jobs.
7. Akron will encourage the concept of new urbanism and regional smart growth.



At the same time, the City began the process of assessing their greenhouse gas emissions by joining the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). Akron used Cities for Climate Protection Software to enter community and governmental data that delivered a municipal and community greenhouse gas footprint. Affinity then met with the Green Ribbon Panel to interpret the data and discuss its relevance when compared to similar cities. Based on that data, Akron committed to greenhouse gas reduction goals of 5% by 2013, 10% by 2018, and 20% reduction by 2025 (from 2005 baseline data). With these goals set and the guiding principles defined, Affinity understood that the City would next need to develop a decision-making matrix which would evaluate and prioritize the action items. However, more goals would also need to be set using additional metrics to assist the prioritization. After guidance from Affinity, the City of Akron recognized that these missing components were stumbling points to the Plan.

Technology

Affinity recognized that there was grassroots momentum within the Smart Action Areas which needed to be captured and reinforced. The workgroups were making the connections, excited about their involvement, and were brainstorming lists of action items. A data warehouse and communication tool was needed to house and facilitate the exchange of information. Additionally, the communication tool needed to assist in the decision-making stages (e.g., review, revision, approval, implementation, and capture of the action items).

By January 2009, Affinity had trained Smart Action Area administrators on a customized web-based system called ehsONLINE[®]. ehsONLINE[®] is Affinity's state-of-the-art, secure, online centralized information management system designed to efficiently and effectively assist in managing data and communications for our customers. The site provides an event calendar and helpful links and news that can be easily entered and updated to keep City employees involved. Through the use of ehsONLINE[®], the City is capturing successful implementation information that will assist in

estimating greenhouse gas data to determine the effectiveness of current policies and initiatives, determine which policies need to be changed, and what area(s) can offer the most opportunity for greenhouse gas reductions. The City will capture these successes and periodically provide the community with a sustainability report card that supports transparency and accountability.

Key Successes

Through consultation and process-building, Affinity assisted the City of Akron in developing a strong foundation for the 2009 Greenprint Sustainability Plan for Akron.

- The process-building component to the Plan was captured in the “Planning and Approach” section which details organization, functions, roles, and responsibilities. Additionally, this backbone to the plan provides tools for environmental literacy specific to each guiding principle, refines review and revision periods, and offers suggestions for policy and initiative development.
- Annually, the Smart Action Areas submit updates to the Plan.
- Successful implementations are captured and amended to the Plan under “Success Stories”.
- The Appendices hold the reference materials such as copies of City and Mayoral resolutions, detailed data from ICLEI including the data sources, and tables of possible grants and funding initiatives that could benefit the City.
- Affinity’s SUSTAINability[®] Program Tool provided the necessary tools to deliver, implement, and maintain a successful sustainability plan that supports environmental progress, economic prosperity, and community concerns.