



Crossroads Resource Center

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Tools for Community Self-determination

The context of the 2004 Minneapolis Sustainability Roundtable:

Minneapolis Planning staff have focused on environmental planning since the 1970s, and the Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC) has coordinated a wealth of citizen activity toward environmental improvement for many years.

The foundation for the Minneapolis Sustainability Initiative was laid in 1992 when a group of labor unionists and environmentalists met to set a vision for making Minneapolis a more sustainable city. The Urban Ecology Coalition (UEC) emerged from this process in 1994. Its “Creating a Sustainable City” conference drew 180 folks and animated a movement.

Four years later, UEC launched a Neighborhood Sustainability Indicators Project in Seward and Longfellow. This effort, led by Crossroads Resource Center, engaged residents in defining measures of sustainability that reflect their community’s long-term vision. Three city-wide Neighborhood Sustainability Roundtables, held in 1998, 1999, and 2000, supported this effort. This was the first effort of its kind in the U.S. and it produced groundbreaking results that have been internationally recognized. See www.crcworks.org/guide.pdf to learn more about this work.

The first Neighborhood Sustainability Conference in 2002 drew 400 attendees. Sponsored by the Minneapolis Center for Neighborhoods, that conference was organized by Sean Gosiewski, now of Draw Forth Consulting.

Mayor Rybak initiated a Green Cities initiative soon after taking office in 2001. As part of that initiative, both Environmental Services and CEAC have encouraged city agencies to reduce energy use, purchase green products, and devise resource saving strategies.

In 2002, the partners listed below began to frame a sustainability plan for the city as a whole. The Minneapolis City Council adopted resolution 2003R-133 (Johnson, Schiff) authorizing the creation of a Sustainability Chapter for the Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan. This is to be in force by the end of June, 2004. The Council resolution states:

"Now Therefore, Be it Resolved by the City Council of the City of Minneapolis:

“...The Minneapolis Sustainability Plan will embrace and enhance ongoing environmental initiatives and help coordinate the City’s planning, policymaking, and budget processes into a more coherent whole. The Plan will help the City integrate the “Three E’s”, Environment, Economy and Equity (including social justice); coordinate efforts; garner buy-in; and increase the effectiveness of our ongoing programs and investments.” *[Excerpt]*

Further, Mayor Rybak committed the city to use the sustainability targets developed by this process in allocating budget priorities. Funding was obtained from the Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance (OEA).

Work commenced in Summer, 2003. Our partners developed a "theory of change" which is our best expression of the way the Minneapolis Sustainability Initiative will work.

The **Theory of Change** for the Minneapolis Sustainability Initiative is:

- City action will animate new initiatives in the Civic realm
- The plan will address environment, economy, and equity at the same time
- Existing activity will be integrated into a unified initiative
- Indicators will become central to the City budget process

We framed the Minneapolis Sustainability Initiative on the following **key assumptions**:

- (1) The city has not had such strong support for sustainability from the Mayor and the Council for a number of years. We want to make best use of this moment.
- (2) Mayor Rybak is determined to improve decision-making processes in the City by basing policy decisions on actual measurements and evidence. Indicators fit into his approach quite naturally.
- (3) We have the opportunity to institutionalize a city budget **process** based on indicators now, while the moment is ripe. This will leave a legacy for future generations.
- (4) **Specific indicators will change over time** as we learn more about sustainability and what implementation steps are most strategic.
- (5) The more diverse the participation in this process, the more likely it is that all Minneapolitans will embrace sustainability as a core of their own lives—and the more likely it is that what we measure will accurately reflect the realities our citizens face.
- (6) Sustainability involves all three "e's": ecology, equity, and economics.
- (7) A wealth of activity has already happened toward this goal and we should build upon the strengths of this prior work wherever possible.
- (8) Existing studies by the city, county, and local nonprofits and foundations offer important precedents. We especially drew upon:
 - City of Minneapolis / Hennepin County Health data
 - Hennepin County SHAPE and Health Disparities studies
 - NorthWay Community Trust indicators of poverty reduction and wealth creation
 - Hennepin County African American Male Project
 - Hennepin County American Indian Family Project
 - Minneapolis Public Schools educational attainment data
 - Minnesota Interfaith Coalition for Affordable Housing
 - Pilot City Health Center indicators of community health
 - Minneapolis Police crime statistics

Most of the above indicators efforts relied upon considerable public input.

On January 17, 2004, two important events in this process were held concurrently. One, the Neighborhood Sustainability Conference, was intended to focus on practical strategies that Twin City neighborhoods could use to protect the environment and reduce resource use. At that conference a second gathering also was held—the Minneapolis Sustainability Roundtable. The Roundtable launched a public process to frame a long-term vision for sustainability in our city, and to propose the best possible list of sustainability indicators for the Minneapolis Sustainability Plan.

MSI Partners:

Minneapolis Environmental Services (Bill Anderson, Guy Fischer)
Citizen's Environmental Advisory Committee (CEAC—Walker Smith and David Byfield,
chairs)
Minneapolis Planning (now Community Planning and Economic Development—Michael
Orange)
Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance (OEA—Phillipp Muessig)
Crossroads Resource Center (CRC—Ken Meter)
Draw Forth Consulting (Sean Gosiewski)

See diagram of public participation process on next page

Minneapolis Sustainability Plan

Public Input Process

