



Education Work Group Report December 11, 2012

TO: Jon Laria, Chair, MD Sustainable Growth Commission

FROM: Calvin Ball, Chair, Education Workgroup

SUBJECT: Update on Progress and 2013 Goals

DATE: December 11, 2013

Our workgroup has been hard at work, developing unique opportunities to engage with professionals, officials, residents, students and youth in Maryland about smart growth. Below is our progress.

Sustainable Growth Challenge

The Sustainable Growth Challenge is a collegiate level interdisciplinary exercise to engage students from across the state in local and regional planning and sustainability issues. As part of an on campus studio exercise, students will analyze the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable growth, and develop creative solutions for actual community challenges. The design competition will provide students the opportunity to interact with local leaders and engage in their own community planning processes.

The Sustainable Growth Challenge will be launched in the Fall of 2013. To be eligible, a faculty lead will be established at participating Universities. Projects will be defined by the students, but must address Maryland's Twelve Planning Visions and the Sustainability themes of Economic, Environmental and Social justice.

The Challenge is being sponsored by the Education Workgroup of the Sustainable Growth Commission, and developed and managed by the University of Maryland, National Center for Research and Education and the MD Department of Natural Resources.

Youth Sustainable Growth Commission

Maryland's Sustainable Growth Commission provides a statewide forum where stakeholders discuss growth and development issues and policies. The commission interacts with state agencies as well as representatives of local jurisdictions and the general public. The specific issues that are addressed range from sustainable development, farmland preservation, Chesapeake Bay related goals and yes, even the relationship between residential growth and school overcrowding.

Amongst its more specific tasks the commission is charged with; “Develop and assist in the implementation of educational and outreach programs about smart growth.” In addition, several members of the commission have expressed concern that there is little or no opportunity for the perspective of Maryland’s youth to be part of the dialog.

One solution brought forward has been the idea to create a Youth or Student Sustainable Growth Commission. It seems natural, that the Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC) would be a great place to connect the students/youth who could participate on such a commission. The mission of MASC is to foster a statewide environment for all secondary school students to express and exchange opinions and ideas, develop leadership skills, and promote student representation and involvement in all groups and organizations impacting the lives of students.

Proposed Minimum Standards for a Youth Commission

For a Youth Growth Commission to have a measurable impact, a minimum level of activity should be attained and maintained.

1. The Commission should have regular meetings. A significant value of the work of commissions is the interaction among its members so this would be an important standard.
2. Connect to the larger Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission. This could be accomplished through the Education Workgroup.
3. Connect back to local Maryland schools on the growth issues that are addressed by the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission.
4. Have statewide representation. Since the MASC is made up of students from around the state this is an important goal.
5. Develop process for advancing new student leadership. As the MASC will have constant turnover as students graduate it will be important to include orientation for new youth commission members.

Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC)

MDP staff made initial contact with the MASC representatives to discuss this proposal. Councilman Calvin Ball, Chair of the education workgroup and Peter Conrad, MDP staff attended the October 23 executive leadership meeting of the MASC in Baltimore. We made presentations to two thirds of the student leadership. There was quite a lot of interest in pursuing this concept. The leadership did raise a number of questions:

1. The MASC leaders felt that there were additional groups that could contribute such as - Maryland Future Farmers of America, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council and Maryland Future Business Leaders of tomorrow
2. Several members expressed concern that they would need additional education and training on the subject matter to sufficiently express the student opinion.
3. There were varying opinions as to how to structure such a group
4. The students also expressed the desire to have a real impact – would this be possible?
5. Finally, questions were raised about how the Student Growth Commission would interact with the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission.

Next Steps

Members of the education workgroup will continue to develop this concept and meet with members of the MASC. The MASC executive committee has regular meeting and we will continue this discussion at a future MASC meeting.

Student Leadership Questions and/or Concerns Raised:

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Review of the Education Requirements for Members of Planning Boards and Commissions and Boards of Appeals

The Smart and Sustainable Growth Act of 2009 requires each local jurisdiction’s Planning Commission/Board and Board of Zoning Appeals members to complete an education course on planning and zoning. The Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission has been tasked to “review periodically the educational requirements for members of planning boards and commissions and boards of appeals required by § 1-206 of the Land Use Article, and evaluate compliance rates for the members. “ The Education Workgroup is in the processes of assessing and evaluating Planning Commissioner and Board of Appeals education in Maryland. The Maryland Department of Planning is taking the lead in staffing this effort in coordination with the Maryland Planning Commissioners Association (MPCA). The MPCA, in existence since 1983, is a statewide, non-profit educational organization of municipal, county and regional planning commissioners and boards of zoning appeals members. MPCA members work to improve the quality of life for all Marylanders through planning, environmental protection, historic preservation, and growth management.

Goals of the Evaluation

1. Assess the effectiveness of the current education efforts
2. Identify course content most valuable for Planning Commissioners and Board of Zoning Appeals members to learn and are also suitable for a training program
3. Find educational techniques that can be utilized to improve participant experience and enhance engagement with course content
4. Gain a better understanding of the factors influencing the completion rate
5. Determine the best platforms for delivering education materials. That platform should balance efficiency and efficacy.

Current Assessment

MDP maintains the membership database for the MPCA. About two-thirds of members have completed the required course. The vast majority has completed the Maryland Department of Planning course. Survey results suggest that most people who have completed MDP's course did so online. The two-thirds rate is consistent across the MPCA membership. There is not a significant difference in completion rates between either Counties and Municipalities or Planning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeal.

Part of this assessment is also looking at how other states train appointed planning and zoning officials and what are some best practices with regards to adult education. Maryland is currently only one of eight states that require a training course, though other states have tried. Maryland's requirements are generally consistent with other state's requirements in terms of topics and number of hours of initial training, but differ in that continuing education is not mandated in Maryland. Maryland also offers greater flexibility and lower cost options than several other states that require training. Research into best practices of adult education, has revealed several guiding principles for classroom instruction. Most common is the need for classroom lectures to be engaging, utilizing different interactive elements that make educational material less abstract. These elements should relate to a participant's experiences to connect theory and practice. On October 15, the MPCA, with assistance from Maryland Department of Planning (MDP), launched an online survey for its members. The survey was designed to gather information on completion rates for the education course and to receive feedback on planning topics members would like to see covered in an education course. The survey was sent directly to 681 MPCA members with unique email addresses and a web link to the survey was sent to 200 additional members using duplicate email addresses. To date, the survey has had 167 responses, with 149 responses coming from the unique address emailing and 18 responses from the generic web link emailing. Initial results from the online survey indicate a preference for self-study. When asked, seventy-two percent of respondents stated they would prefer to do training online as opposed to twenty-two percent who stated they preferred in person training. When asked to rank topics they would like to see covered, comprehensive plans and planning law were consistently ranked as respondent's top choices (Each topic received 23% of first place votes out of 9 possible topics).

Next Steps

1. Expand MPCA survey audience: MPCA is sponsoring a hardcopy mailing of the survey to allow everyone a chance to respond. The first attempt was strictly internet based and restricted to people with email addresses. The selection biases inherent to internet based surveying may fail to capture the full range of opinions members hold on course delivery platforms (online vs live) and content.
2. Planning Director Roundtable: MDP will engage with planning directors across the state on December 13th in Annapolis. The focus of this conversation will be on planning director's perceptions of training needs. Due to their experience and education, planning directors are able to present a unique, well informed perspective on the knowledge and skills required by new planning and zoning officials. This discussion will also inform,

MDP, MPCA and the Education workgroup about local trainings offered by counties and municipalities.

3. Engage with stakeholders in Maryland: Numerous organizations seek to educate elected and appointed officials in the State of Maryland of a wide range of topics. Among them, Maryland Municipal League, Maryland Association of Counties, and University of Maryland Extension are potential sources of information of best practices for educational techniques. Furthermore, partnerships with these organizations would allow greater access to training resources and experience.
4. Engage representatives from states that have a training requirement: Seven other states currently require some form of training for planning and zoning officials. Their experience and history with training can help form a benchmark against which Maryland's program can be judged. Required training is a relatively new concept for planning and zoning officials and so there aren't many tools for judging the effectiveness of a program. Engagement with other practitioners will help develop standards for Maryland.
5. The Education Workgroup will complete its assessment by early summer 2013.

Integration/Expansion of Planning Degrees/Courses into MD Community Colleges or Institutions

Conducted a baseline analysis of what institutions offered planning degrees and courses. Identified Chesapeake College as a prospective institution that is receptive to work with the Education Workgroup.

Challenges to offering a planning course at Chesapeake College: There are Community Colleges taking the lead in offering environmental science courses including College of Southern Maryland, Hagerstown Community College and Anne Arundel Community College. The approach of these institutions of learning has been to provide generalist course offerings with a focus on environmental science to entice those students who may have an interest but no background in environmental sciences.

Chesapeake College is very receptive to work with the Education Workgroup and our focus on engaging students at the community college level in this career.

Social Media as an Education Tool

OVERVIEW

The Education Workgroup is working to use Social Media as a tool for communication to the real estate industry, academia, public officials and the general public. There is lots of great information published daily that discusses smart and sustainable growth. It is not the intention of the Education Committee to replicate efforts currently underway, but to add relevant information when appropriate and to 'rebroadcast' information that may reinforce our initiative to our audience.

Specifically, we propose to use Twitter, Linked In and Facebook for this purpose. Each of these 'channels' may reach different audiences, but can contain similar content. The MD Department of Planning is currently using Twitter and Facebook and could either post content released by the Commission or assist in developing new FB and Twitter accounts for the Commission. We also suggest the use of hash tags to further spread the content of the post throughout the Twitter community. This can either be through a previously created hash tag (i.e. #sustainability or #green) or through one created specifically for the MD Department of Planning (i.e. #MDSustainableGrowth). Forming a *group* within LinkedIn may be the most effective way to spread the word about smart growth in MD and give people a sense of ownership and contribution. Anyone that is a LinkedIn member can join a group and contribute to discussions and respond to articles posted by others. This is an excellent way to stay abreast of sustainable growth issues and to inform the public about our mission.

CONTENT

Specific content will be reviewed (see below) but will include topics such as:

- Commission Events
- Industry Events
- Development Tools that Promote Sustainable Growth
- Review and Summary of Exemplary Growth Metrics

Perhaps the most important content will be that which is posted by individuals that choose to join the LinkedIn group. This content will be in the form of posting news articles and beginning discussion topics, similar to a Blog. ULI (Urban Land Institute) and many other organizations have established LinkedIn groups.

IMPLEMENTATION

Upon approval of this approach with the Education Workgroup and the overall Commission, my staff and I (Bryce Turner) will set up the accounts in conjunction with the MD Department of Planning. John Coleman is the Information Technology contact within MDP that will assist with Implementation.

A small group of Education Workgroup members may want to be involved in reviewing content proposed for social media distribution. Additionally, this group of individuals, as members of the Linked In group, will be able to monitor content and frequency of use to determine its success.

Create a Public General Campaign About Smart Growth

Smart, Green & Growing: A Proposed Public Campaign to Engage Marylanders in Promoting Smart, Sustainable Growth

Maryland's [Sustainable Growth Commission](#) provides a statewide forum for stakeholders to discuss growth and development issues and policies. The Commission interacts with state agencies as well as representatives of local jurisdictions and the general public, addressing such issues as land use, transportation, farmland preservation, economic development, Chesapeake Bay restoration, school overcrowding and infrastructure needs.

Among its responsibilities, the Commission has been charged with developing and assisting in the implementation of education and outreach on smart and sustainable growth. While these efforts can -- and do -- take a variety of specific forms, the Education Workgroup also sees the need to develop an overarching public campaign, one that distills the state's commitment to sustainability into a clearly enunciated, concise set of values, goals and strategies. And one that reaches the broadest possible audience via a variety of media, events and activities.

Above all, the campaign should seek to create a well-defined, widely shared understanding of what the state hopes to accomplish with sustainable growth policies and programs, and of their benefits to all stakeholders.

By developing some basic branding and messaging for the campaign, the Commission can better shape its overall outreach to residents, students, municipal and county officials, private sector leaders and other stakeholders. As new initiatives emerge, they can then be associated with objectives and priorities tied to specific campaign themes. But the campaign, while simple and straightforward, must be more than a set of slogans. The goal is to share and reinforce some consistent ideas about how to define and create, in the words of Governor Martin O'Malley, "a stronger economy, a healthier environment and a greener, more sustainable future for all Maryland families."

It's a way to draw clear connections among the wide variety of new and ongoing programs and policies within state agencies and at the local level. The campaign also can help integrate other initiatives proposed by the Education Workgroup, such as the establishment of a Youth Sustainable Growth Commission or the idea of creating a Sustainable Growth Challenge for professors and college students who compete to earn a "Smart, Green and Growing" Award. The campaign should use a multi-media platform to target diverse audiences, settings and events with everything from op-ed pieces to YouTube clips. It must, in other words, speak to all Marylanders.

Build on Smart, Green & Growing

A framework for this public campaign has already been well developed with the launch of the [Smart, Green & Growing](#) initiative in 2009. The phrase itself provides a foundation for broad-based public education efforts that can build on both statewide and local activities. The vehicle for engaging the public might be anything from a marketing plan for farmers' markets and Main Street programs to competitive annual awards at high schools and colleges and community recognition events in which local leaders share their success stories with a statewide audience. In some cases, the Commission could use the campaign to launch an entirely new outreach initiative, while in others, the goal might be to simply extend the *Smart, Green & Growing* moniker to existing programs or materials, such as the newly revised Smart Growth Teachers

Resource Guide. The campaign also could be employed to better promote an existing *Smart, Green & Growing* concept, such as the "Idea Bank" featured on the website's home page and on its "Become a Partner" tab.

Again, the goal should be to give Marylanders a clear-cut association between specific policies and programs and what's happening in their own neighborhoods. When they hear "Smart, Green & Growing," it should translate to a concrete picture of quality of life improvements, housing choices, job growth, air and water quality and/or other elements of sustainability, as well as to existing models and examples on the ground.

Just as important, the Campaign should integrate all of the state's other outreach and education efforts around a consistent set of goals and a shared vision for smart and sustainable growth.

Proposed Launch

As the starting point for this campaign, the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission could develop a *Smart, Green & Growing* "branding initiative" in 2013.

The Education Workgroup recommends an opportunity for the Commission to appoint and convene an advisory group of individuals representing state and local government, public schools and institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, developers and business leaders, and other relevant stakeholders as a first step toward launching the full-blown public education campaign by September. In convening the advisory group for the first time, the Commission should outline specific goals and priorities for the Campaign and a timeframe for achieving them.

Maryland's Smart, Green and Growing [website](#) provides an excellent starting point and set of templates to build a public education campaign, and the Commission can easily draw from its own ranks in establishing a Campaign Advisory Group.

First Steps

1. **Take stock.** The Advisory Group for Maryland's *Smart, Green & Growing* Education Campaign should begin by compiling a comprehensive list of the many substantive education and outreach activities already under way at the state and local level. The purpose would be to look for ways to complement these efforts and to identify critical elements that are missing and should become Commission priorities.
2. **Set Goals/Priorities.** The Advisory Group should consult a broad cross-section of stakeholders in its initial work to develop consensus around specific goals, timeframes for achieving them, and who should be engaged in developing the individual Campaign elements. Following are some examples of sustainable growth elements that might yield specific goals:

Economic Development

Green Jobs Growth

Targeted Workforce Training/Education at High School and College Levels

"Buy Local" Campaigns

Employer Participation in "Live Near Work" and other Sustainability Initiatives

Main Street Programs

Mixed-Use Zoning

Land Preservation and Environmental Protection

Chesapeake Bay Cleanup
 Healthy Fisheries
 Natural Resources Protection
 Green Infrastructure for Stormwater Management
 Farmland Preservation
 Air and Water Quality

Land Use and Development

Urban Revitalization
 Redevelopment of Brownfield Properties
 Infill Development
 Pedestrian-Friendly Community Design
 Transit-Oriented Development
 Historic Preservation
 Urban Agriculture and Food Security

Public Facilities

Transportation Choices (Complete Streets, Pedestrian and Bike Facilities, Transit Service)
 School Siting in Walkable Communities
 Sewage Treatment Plant Upgrades
 Community Parks and Other Public Space

Housing

Diverse Housing Types
 Mixed-Income Housing
 Green Building and Energy Efficiency Standards
 Compact Neighborhood Design
 Innovative Housing Affordability Strategies (e.g. inclusionary zoning, "granny flats")

Other Policy and Planning Priorities

Climate Change – Emissions Reduction and Adaptation Planning
 Innovative and Inclusive Public Engagement
 A Role for School Officials and Public Health Professionals in Community Planning

3. **Identify Success Stories and Models.** A critical step in making the Sustainable Growth Campaign comprehensible to a lay audience will be to identify success stories and best practices emerging across the state. The Advisory Group should take stock of Sustainable Communities Tax Credit projects and talk to local leaders and developers to find other on-the-ground projects that can serve as models for development and community design, as well as policy successes that illustrate effective strategies to promote sustainable growth.
4. **Engage Stakeholders.** As mentioned above, the advisory group must identify all of the stakeholder groups that will be targeted with the Campaign's messages and develop

strategies for how best to reach these diverse groups. Listed below is a sampling of stakeholder groups from different sectors and different geographic regions across the state.

5. **Engage Youth.** It's important to also consider how to work directly with high school and college students in particular. The Advisory Group itself should include at least one youth member. The energy, creativity and great stake in the outcome that he or she will bring to the process of developing this campaign will be invaluable. A college student also will be helpful in developing multi-media and social networking initiatives to promote different strategies and ways to address development conflicts and challenges.

Conclusion

The Commission's *Smart, Green & Growing* campaign should be designed to build on, rather than supplant, emerging and existing education efforts such as the newly revised Smart Growth Teachers Resource guide. The idea is to clearly "brand" Maryland's smart growth efforts in ways that enable citizens across the state to see how these policies and programs can be tailored to their communities and benefit their families wherever they live.

It's simply a matter of devising a common language to describe the challenges Maryland faces as it grows, as well as the strategies and solutions that will yield more sustainable growth and quality of life improvements. It's about bringing diverse education and outreach initiatives into the same framework, so that they all reinforce each other.



SUSTAINABLE GROWTH CHALLENGE



Quality Of Life And Sustainability



H I G H L I G H T S

- For undergraduate/graduate students pursuing degrees in community planning, architecture, engineering, environmental science, or other sustainability-minded concentrations
- Students will gain invaluable experience with community leaders and real issues
- Project may last one or two semesters and be for academic credit



A B O U T

THE Sustainable Growth Challenge is a collegiate level interdisciplinary exercise to engage students from across the state in local and regional planning and sustainability issues.

As part of an on campus studio exercise, students will analyze the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable growth and develop creative solutions for real community challenges. The design competition will provide students the opportunity to interact with local leaders and engage in their own community planning processes.

The Sustainable Growth Challenge will be launched in the fall of 2013. To be eligible, a faculty lead team will be established at participating universities. Projects will be defined by the students, but must address Maryland's Twelve Planning Visions (above; plan.maryland.gov/whatIsIt/12visions.shtml) and sustainability's triple bottom line of economic, environmental and social justice.

The Challenge is being sponsored by the Education Workgroup of the Sustainable Growth Commission, and developed and managed by the University of Maryland, National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

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