

**LWV Jefferson County** ---taken from their Every Member Material in their 2009 Study of Sustainability

**Why are Leaguers Concerned?**

Human conditions are changing rapidly. The world population is increasing. The world's resources are limited. Business has expanded globally with the help of the internet and cell phones, boosting greater numbers of people into the middle class who want cars, computers houses, all of which require energy to manufacture and to operate. The tension leads to competition for resources and to political instability. How do we make existing communities sustainable? How do we transform communities where residents are disconnected from their neighbors, where they drive to buy foods and goods produced in other countries that are shipped in at great expense and use of fuels, — places which may be plagued by crime, poverty, environmental degradation or lack of opportunity — into healthy places to live, work, conduct business and raise children? The answers go beyond just green efforts, but encompass all the above-mentioned positions and more.

**Balancing environmental, economic and human needs**

Sustainable community development goes beyond green measures, addressing the full range of a community's needs such as housing, health care, education and public safety. It expands our definition of sustainability to include physical and social environments as well as the natural environment. Sustainable communities are active, inclusive, safe, well-run, environmentally sensitive, well-designed and built, well-connected, thriving, well served, and fair for everyone. Sustainable communities embody the principles of sustainable development. The examples listed below are the beginnings of efforts that need coordination to incorporate them into communities around the globe. They are insufficient in themselves but wonderful examples of what we are capable of achieving.

**Examples of International Efforts toward Sustainability**

- Britain is encouraging smart meters so that residents can figure out how much energy using devices cost when in use.
- Ireland has a 22-cent tax per plastic bag, which has resulted in a 90 percent reduction in use. The European Union requires plastic bag manufacturers to take the bags back and recycle them.
- At an Italian company, Italcemeti, research for the last 8 years has yielded cement that through a photo catalytic process absorbs 40-60% of greenhouse gas emitted in its vicinity. The results have been verified by the National Research Council.
- Environmental concerns have emerged as a dominant driver of global corporations, marrying an impulse to be good stewards of the planet with an equally ancient desire to make money. *Newsweek*, September 23, 2008 "Green Really Means Business".

**Examples of National Efforts toward Sustainability**

- The Stimulus Package has a number of provisions for clean energy production and other sustainable actions.
- An assessment of the "electric productivity" of the 50 states indicates that energy efficiency could not only cut consumption by 30 percent, but also eliminate the need for more than 60 percent of coal-fired generation, according to a new study by the Rocky Mountain Institute, "Assessing the Electric Productivity Gap and the U.S. Efficiency Opportunity,"
- Technological advances in solar power generation are moving at speeds not seen before. Several companies are moving quickly toward the mass production of thin-film solar panels, which are flexible and often cheaper to produce. Currently thin film makes up only 10% of the solar market, but its share is growing. Both the

production and the installation of these panels should create many new jobs. Time June 23, 2008, "Solar Power's New Style"

- **Architectural Institute Of America**- The greatest potential for decreasing carbon emissions comes from the building sector because it is one of the largest contributors to carbon emissions. "Green improvements" typically cost less than 2%, but can reduce costs over time by 10-1 (maintenance, health, increase natural light, etc.)
- The American College and University President's Climate Commitment, signed over the last two years by more than 550 institutions, represents about 30 percent of American Students. Those who sign promise that within a year they will inventory their greenhouse gas emissions and within two years will formulate a plan to arrive at carbon neutrality - that is, zero net CO<sup>2</sup> emissions.
- Los Angeles voted to ban plastic shopping bags from stores beginning in July 2010. Shoppers can either bring their own bags or pay 25 cents for a paper or biodegradable bags. The average American family of four uses 1,500 plastic bags each year.
- Boston and other cities weigh garbage and those with less garbage are eligible for rewards. Cities which have "pay as you throw" systems tend to have less garbage thrown away and more recycled. By the time you have reached the age of 70, you have generated 50 tons of trash.

### **Metro Efforts**

- The cities of Denver, Lakewood, Golden and Arvada all have sustainability plans.
- The City and County of Denver has a web site [www.greenprintdenver.org](http://www.greenprintdenver.org)
- RTD and FasTraks have a sustainability program.
- In 2006, 37 mayors in the area signed a memorandum of understanding with the goal to work together to better the region in the area of energy efficiency and conservation, recycling, reducing fuel consumption and education about alternative energy.
- Red Rocks Community College -10 years ago the Environmental Technologies program had 70 students, now it has 250
- Customers at Vitamin Cottage, as of April, will either have to bring their own bags or will get their groceries in recycled boxes
- There is a Bike Sharing Program in Fort Collins, and there was a DNC program this summer in Denver for renting bikes.
- XCEL Energy and the City of Boulder are pairing to provide Smart Grid, the nation's first fully integrated electrical system that allows residents and businesses to optimize renewable energy, increase energy conservation and minimize the city's carbon foot print. |
- DIA's Office of Environmental Services has partnered with Denver Solid Waste Management and fifteen concessionaires in a pilot composting collection program. The collected material is sent to A1 Organics' commercial composting facility where it is turned into nutrient-rich fertilizer. This helps to minimize the amount of trash disposed at the airport and reduces greenhouse gas emissions that result from depositing these organic materials into a landfill. The pilot will run for three months.
- Rep. Ed Perlmutter's GREEN Act (Green Resources for Energy Efficient Neighborhoods) provides incentives to lenders to provide low interest loans to businesses and consumers that buy, build or remodel to improve energy efficiency.

### **What is the League's Role?**

In a recent article in *High Country News*, "It's Time to Cowboy Up", Mary Greenfield said, "A personal sense of responsibility for the common good-that's ground zero for a culture that works." It will require small as well as large changes in the way we conduct ourselves. The

LWV, as always, should be at the forefront of the movement to effect these changes and our positions should reflect our commitments to that end. John Stuart Mill, one of the founders of classical economics, would have approved. In his *Principles of Political Economy*, published in 1848, he predicted that once the work of economic growth was done, a "stationary" economy would emerge in which we could focus on human improvement: "There would be as much scope as ever for all kinds of mental culture, and moral and social progress... for improving the art of living and much more likelihood of it being improved, when minds cease to be engrossed by the art of getting on." From *New Scientist*, "Science in Society".