Project Name: Chestertown Goes Green

Municipality: The Town of Chestertown, Maryland

Population category: 3,000 to 10,000

Chief elected official:

Mayor Margo Bailey
Town Hall
Chestertown, MD 21620
410.778.0500

Project Summary

Mayor Margo Bailey initiated the Chestertown Goes Green project after signing onto the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement in 2007. The goals of this project are for the Town to implement as many of the suggested action items listed in the mayors agreement as is feasible, to get citizens involved in the process, and to provide a working model for other townships on the Eastern Shore to use as a starting point for their own greening efforts.

The contact person for this project is Briggs Cunningham (410.810.7174, office), who is the Climate Action Coordinator at the Center for Environment & Society at Washington College.
Why was the program needed?

Chestertown is the seat of Kent County, and a town steeped in history. Situated on the Chester River, the Town is surrounded by a tapestry of farmland and Chesapeake Bay estuaries. It became apparent that the Town needed to implement an environmental action plan when the science of global warming made it clear that a rise in the Earth’s sea level could have catastrophic consequences for the Town and for the County.

Obviously, the Town’s actions alone cannot forestall global warming. However, they can inspire other towns to act as well, and perhaps that will be enough to give momentum toward preventing coastal destruction. Saving taxpayer money in the face of rising energy prices and landfill fees, improving the Town’s tree canopy, and maintaining the rural character of the Eastern Shore that is under increasing development pressure are some of the bonuses that go along with the project.

How is the program set up?

The program is set up as a partnership between the Town and the Center for Environment & Society (CES) at Washington College. Using grant funds from Town Creek Foundation, the Chesapeake Bay Trust, and Shared Earth Foundation, CES hired a Climate Action Coordinator to help the Town manage the program through the Town’s Climate Action Committee. The committee works to identify action areas, make suggestions to the Town Council (such as an Energy Star purchasing policy, anti-idling rules, and tree management ordinances), and serves as a vehicle for greater citizen involvement.

What does it cost?

The program uses grant funds from several private foundations and some operating expenses from CES, and so costs the Town nothing. The Town and CES have shared incidental costs of printing and mailing a recycling newsletter, the printing of some banners, and the production and maintenance of the town’s green website (see http://chestertowngoesgreen.washcoll.edu/).
**Who benefits?**

The program benefits all citizens of Chestertown, as well as those in the rest of Kent County. Taxpayer money is being saved, and environmental issues are being resolved which helps the County retain its appeal to tourists, hunters, boaters, history buffs, and retirees.

**Is the program innovative?**

The program is innovative because it involves a partnership between the Town and Washington College. Citizens of Chestertown are becoming more involved in the process, especially through “Neighbors for Neighborhoods” (an association of homeowners in the Town that is dedicated to being a model for the rest of the Town in maintaining a healthy and sustainable environment), and students at the College learn about the issues by assisting in some of the analytical work. Other examples of the partnership include: the chair of the Town’s Planning Commission having a seat on the College’s Climate Action Committee; use of the College’s Geographic Information System (GIS) lab to map out the Town’s tree canopy; and, having staff at CES help the Town draft tougher urban forest management ordinances.

**Can you demonstrate tangible results?**

Tangible results from this program can be seen through a variety of examples: increased participation of citizens in the “Neighbors for Neighborhoods” program; involvement of citizens, local school students and college students in tree planting in the community (see pictures in appendix); increased awareness of the program through newspaper articles (see appendix) and radio spots; an improvement in recycling rates in the Town and in the County (according to the Kent County Recycling Program, 1,557 tons of post-consumer materials were recycled in Kent County in 2008, up from 1,454 tons in 2007; and, in Chestertown alone there were 122 new participant sign-ups for the recycling program in 2008, up from 97 in 2007); and, such a significant reduction in the amount of nitrogen, phosphorous, and other toxins released into the Chester River from the Town’s improved wastewater
treatment plant that the strictest regulations imposed by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Maryland Department of the Environment are easily met and surpassed.

**What is the expected future impact of this program?**

It is expected that this program will have an impact on how the citizens of Chestertown and Kent County perceive their roles as stewards of the land and the water around them. Over time, this shift in perception will help bring about a change in the way resources are managed, thus positively affecting the environmental health of the area. Already the Town is looking at long-term sustainable solutions, such as: LEED standards for new construction; greater flexibility for green retrofits to historic structures; tougher tree ordinances for increased tree canopy and decreased logging; and implementation of long-term tracking and management tools.

**Were citizens or the private sector involved?**

The program is overseen by the Town’s Climate Action Committee, which consists of a dozen citizens, the Mayor, and the Climate Action Coordinator at CES. The committee has been successful in also getting involvement from local businesses: they have improved their recycling rates; they are participating in a month-long “Earth Day” program for April whereby they will promote their “green” products and services; and, the Chestertown Rotary Club is sponsoring green totes to be given away at the farmers market in town on Saturday mornings.

**Can other municipalities implement a similar program?**

One of the goals of the program is to provide a working model of Chestertown’s experiences that other municipalities can use a starting point for their own greening efforts. All of the procedures that are involved in this program are being posted to the Town’s green web site, and a “toolkit” is being produced that will make available to the public and other municipalities the various “tools” used in the Town’s environmental action plan.
Appendix

Chestertown Goes Green newsletter that was sent to all residences

So, everyone, use the green bind

America Chestertown residents! You can effectively reduce your household waste stream by recycling. Kent County Recycling Program offers free curbside recycling at Chestertown and all municipalities and rural areas in the county. All the details about curbside recycling can be found on the website at www.kentrecycle.com. For more information or how to sign up for this recycling program, please call 410-778-5900.

Why Recycle?

First, it's good for our economy. Why? The Town of Chestertown spends an average of $5,000 a month on garbage that we are paying for, not to mention the money it saves us in the long run. Recycling is a big business, and it is growing. If you don't recycle, you lose money.

What is recycled?

Nylons and certain toenails, eyeglass frames and other plastic items, cans, paper, newspapers, and glass bottles. Also, some metals can be recycled. These items are not necessarily considered recyclable, but they can be recycled if you have the materials and the space to do it.

What needs to be separated?

Before you can separate your recyclables, you need to know what can and cannot be recycled. The following items CAN be recycled in the Kent County green boxes:

- Corrugated cardboard
- Newspapers
- All mixed paper
- Shredded paper
- Aluminum & tin cans
- Glass bottles & jars (clear, brown, blue & green glass)
- Plastic bottles & jugs

What kinds of plastic can NOT be recycled?

Aluminum foil, aluminum mesh, and plastic cups are not accepted. You can recycle water bottles, milk bottles, and other plastic containers, but not all plastic is recyclable. Some types of plastic are not recyclable due to the cost and labor involved in processing them.

What types of paper can be recycled?

Newspaper, corrugated cardboard, paper, paper towels, paper napkins, paper bags, plastic bags, plastic containers, and plastic bottles. These materials are accepted and can be recycled at no extra cost.

Where can I get recycling bins?

For more information on where to get recycling bins, call Kent County Recycling Program at 410-778-5900 or visit www.kentrecycle.com.

What do you recycle with your recycling?

Your recycling is collected by the county and sold to a company that sorts and sells it. The money you earn from recycling is used to support the county's recycling program.

Chestertown Goes Green

Reduce Reuse Renew

Recycle Recycle Recycle

Earth Day poster for local merchants to display during April
Neighbors For Neighborhoods program

NEIGHBORS FOR NEIGHBORHOODS

February 2008

CHESTERTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD GOES GREEN

The neighborhood in the vicinity of Campus Avenue has accepted the Town’s request to be a model for the Town in going green. We have a long-standing association of proud homeowners who have always placed a high value on maintaining a healthy and sustainable environment.

We have enthusiastically accepted the challenge to do even more as a test case for the Town in implementing “green” practices in the day-to-day maintenance of homes and yards.

We have formed a committee and have studied literature provided by the Mayor. We have prepared and distributed 60 copies of a survey with 30 questions to find out what specific practices neighbors now use or would consider adopting. We evaluated the results and will follow up within a year to determine what behaviors have changed.

We are promoting awareness and becoming better educated by holding monthly speakers and workshops, to which the public can be invited. A number of people have asked for information sessions with experts on various environmentally-sound activities in order to be better equipped to put green practices into practice. Topics include rain barrel installation and effective use of native plant species.

The neighbors have formed a partnership with Kingsstown Farm, Home and Garden, Inc., to stock and purchase organic lawn and soil-friendly products.

Taking the opportunity to widely promote the message, the neighborhood built a float for the Town’s Halloween parade on the theme of “Chestertown Goes Green”, using live plants, hay, a rain barrel, a solar panel, and signs. All participants wore specially-designed “Go Green!” T-shirts, showing everyone that you can have fun going green. Washington college student service groups also participated. The float won first prize in the parade.

“I am thrilled that this neighborhood has picked up the gauntlet to go green,” says Margo Bailey. “This is the start of an effort that Chestertown can be very proud of and very grateful for. It’s enormously positive,” she added.
The Town of Chestertown is hosting information sessions on home and garden practices that are environmentally friendly.

CHESTER TOWN HALL
7:30-8:30 p.m.
February 11 - Affordable Solar Energy for the Home
With Roy Mears and son, Dusty, local builders and renovators of historic homes. Learn about small and large home modifications for better energy efficiency as well as practices than can be adopted by residents for greater energy conservation.

March 3 - Sustainable Gardening
With Bob Bell, President of Bell Design, Inc. Learn about regional native plants, proper plant selection, water management, and the most important green garden practices. Originally from Easton, Bell is a landscape architect who designs gardens for historic properties and landscaping for small city spaces as well as urban roof decks and large estates. He has appeared as a guest designer on HGTV’s “Curb Appeal”.

April 23 – Rain Gardens and Native Plants
With Liz Starkey and Certified Professional Horticulturists Robyn Affron and Cindy King from Kingsport Farm, Home, and Garden. Benefit the Chesapeake Watershed by designing your garden with native plants, installing a rain garden and creating backyard habitats. The buzz word of the evening will be biodiversity. We can all make a difference!

Robyn Affron is a member of the Chesapeake Conservation Landscape Council, a coalition dedicated to promoting and educating the public about conservation-based landscaping practices to benefit the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

May 14- Green Cleaning Basics
With Paul McMullen, Maintenance Supervisor, and Buck Schuyler, Gardener, Adkins Arboretum
Ingredients in commercial cleaners can pollute the environment both inside and outside your home. Learn about natural alternatives to toxic, caustic, and flammable cleaning products. Learn how to make your own “green” products and discuss those available in stores. Samples of both natural and caustic products will be on hand for comparison.

June 11- Our River Needs Our Help
Two Chester River Association volunteer Board members—Marcy Dunn Ramsey, artist, illustrator, and author, and Andrew McCown, Associate Director of Echo Hill Outdoor School — explain the role we play in the health of the River, the work of the Riverkeeper, and what we can do as residents.

GO GREEN PROGRAMS
WINTER/SPRING 2009

For though we may be the Earth’s gardeners, we are also its stewards. And we won’t get anywhere until we come to terms with this critical ambiguity about our role—that we are at once the problem and the only possible solution to the problem.

Michael Pollan

Pat Gates
Sally Harding
Phyllis Lauro
Annie Warhurst

Programs are coordinated by the Go Green group of Neighbors for Neighborhoods, an association of residents in the vicinity of Washington College and the Chester River. For questions, contact wpcum@drw.com

Committee Members:
Karen Ashley
Anne Charles
Muriel Cole
Julie Dulin

Town of Chestertown
www.chestertowngoesgreen.washcoll.edu
Middle school students planting trees with help from college students and residents

Residents undertake a ground-truthing exercise for Chestertown’s tree inventory

A section of a digital image of the Town’s tree canopy with crowns outlined
Bailey stumps for concepts of ‘green’
Banners, door hangers will tout conservation

By Peter Heck

CHESTERTOWN — A new banner will soon be visible around town. It says, “Chesapeake Bay Needs a Green Champion.”

Mayor Mike Bailey is doing what he can to make sure that’s more than just a slogan.

On Monday, Bailey and Briggs Cunningham, climate action coordinator at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, unveiled a new promotional tool for the green initiative they have been creating for the town.

The green-and-white banner displaying the slogan also includes the “Two Rs” of responsible environmental practices — reduce, reuse, recovery, recycle.

It will be on display at Earth Day, Tea Party, and other community events.

Another facet of the campaign is a printed door hanger, like a hotel “Do not disturb” sign, listing ways residents can save money while helping the environment.

Plans are to enlist volunteers to distribute the door hangers door-to-door.

The door hanger offers basic environmental tips, driving less, turning off lights, taking shorter showers, being water savvy, and using compact fluorescent bulbs instead of incandescent ones, among others.

The tips can lead to savings both of money and energy — and passing them on to neighbors so they can spread the benefits to the whole community.

Bailey also called attention to the banner and the mayor on the Monday meeting of mayor and council, where she distributed a flyer promoting green practices for offices.

The hanger also urges participation in the town’s annual recyclable program, which does widespread pickup of recyclable materials in town.

Bailey said that one of her major goals is to increase recycling, and eventually make it mandatory for businesses in town. Green recycling bins are available at town hall.

For details on the county recycling program and recyclable materials, see www.kent-county.com/gov/waste.

Plastic is a particular problem.

(See Green, Page 26a)

Chester I

By Jack Shaum

Special to the Bay Times

CHESTERTOWN — The first report card on the health of the river gives the tributaries of the Chesapeake and a grade of “C” for a main river into which they flow.

The report card, released April 24, gives strategies his office is exploring, including programs that can help struggling businesses.

The report card can be found online at www. Chestertown.com. Bailey said he wants to see the plan in place by the end of the year.

Chester I was first proposed in 2004, and it is one of the most comprehensive assessments of the state’s waterways.

Chester I is a tool to measure the health of the river and to identify areas that need improvement.

The report card is based on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the most unhealthy and 10 being the healthiest.

The report card includes data on water quality, habitat, and fish and wildlife populations.

The report card is a valuable tool for local and state officials to make informed decisions about the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

The report card is available on the Chesapeake Bay Foundation’s website at www.chesapeakebay.org.
It would be better to say ‘Kent County goes green’

Last year the Chestertown Mayor and Council began a “Chestertown Goes Green” theme that continues today with increasing momentum.

Mayor Margo Bailey has been the champion of this admirable campaign to encourage town residents to conserve energy, recycle and protect the environment. Most recently she has begun a push to get businesses to recycle.

None of the concepts are particularly new – Chestertown has supported conservation for 27 years in its Tree City USA program. Galena has done the same for 19 years.

It follows the example of Canadian environmentalist David Suzuki who has touted his “10 ways” of reducing energy consumption and preventing global warming with recommendations of flying less, walking more, planning travel more efficiently, recycling and composting trash and conserving energy and using or encouraging more alternate energy sources (see www.davidsuzuki.org).

But there is renewed emphasis due to the skyrocketing costs of fossil fuels and the continued degradation of our environment. The Chesapeake Bay is in worse condition than when active cleanup plans were started decades ago. Bay fish, crab and oyster populations have been on a decline. The Chester River Association graded the water in the river a “D.”

Last week, Bailey unveiled promotional tools including banners and door hangers. The banners encourage people to use the “four Rs” – reduce, reuse, recover, recycle.

Bailey is to be commended, not only for promoting a good program and sound ideas to live by, but for keeping the issue in the spotlight.

Even as we asked last year, we wonder why the other government agencies, such as Rock Hall, Millington and Betterton, are not doing the same thing. Why are only two of our five towns Tree Cities? Why do not all of our towns have banners and door hangers?

Given the size of this county, Kent could easily set a good example for its local effort, for the state and nation.

Going green is a concept we all need to support.

Monthly sessions teach people ways to go green

By Peter Heck
pheck@chespub.com

CHESTERTOWN – Do you want to learn about solar energy for your home? Or are you thinking of starting a rain garden? You’re in luck – there are just a couple of the topics to be explored in a series of “Go Green Programs” sponsored by the town of Chestertown.

The information sessions, coordinated by the Go Green Group of Neighbors for Neighborhoods, are part of a series of Go Green Programs inspired by Mayor Margo Bailey’s green agenda for the town. They will be held monthly during 2009. All programs are in town hall, and run from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Roy and Dusty Means, a father-son team of builders and renovators, will discuss “Affordable Solar Energy for the Home” on Wednesday, Feb. 11. They will discuss small and large home modifications that can improve energy efficiency. Also on the agenda will be a variety of techniques for residents to conserve energy in the home.

March 3, landscape architect Rob Bell will present “Sustainable Gardening,” with information on regional native plants, plant selection, water management, and other green practices for gardeners. Bell’s background includes designing gardens for historic properties and landscaping for small city spaces including urban roof decks.

Liz Starkey of Kingstown Farm, Home, and Garden will be the presenter for “Rain Gardens and Native Plants” on April 23. Assisting her will be Cindy King and Rhynon Affton, both of whom are certified professional horticulturists at Kingstown Farm, Home, and Garden.

April 14, the topic is “Green Cleaning Basics,” with Paul McMullen, maintenance supervisor, and Buck Schuyler, gardener, of Adlitis Arboriculture. The program will explore alternatives to toxic, smelly and flammable commercial cleaning products. Both do-it-yourself and store-bought alternatives will be discussed.

The June 11 program is titled, “Our River Needs Our Help,” and features artist and author Mary Dunn Ramsey and Andy McCowan, associate director of Echo Hill Outdoor School. In their role as volunteer board members of the Chester River Association, they will explain the work of the Riverkeeper, and how residents can play a role in improving the health of the river.

The series got off to a strong start in the January program on rain barrels, given by Starkey, King and Affton, along with Bill Thompson, manager of Kingstown Farm, Home, and Garden. The presentation drew a full house, according to Sally Harding, one of the committee members for Neighbors for Neighborhoods. Muriel Cole, also a committee member, called the large turnout “encouraging.”

“We had no idea how many people we were going to get,” Harding said on Tuesday. She described the session, which included a PowerPoint presentation on rain barrels by Affton, as “really good,” and said she was looking forward to the February presentation on solar energy.

Neighbors for Neighborhoods is an association of Chestertown residents, many of whom live in the East Campus Avenue area.

For more information, visit www.chestertownsgreen.wdweb. edu or e-mail Cole at campusave@dmv.com. Also, a brochure describing the programs is available at town hall.