

Chestertown Community Green Plan

Since signing the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement in the summer of 2007, Mayor Margo Bailey and the Town's Green Committee has initiated a number of projects that will help the Town meet its obligations to the agreement.

1. Inventory global warming emissions in Town operations and in the community, set reduction targets and create an action plan.

Greenhouse gas emissions inventories have been taken for the Town's operations since 2007. Targets are set to align with those included in Maryland's state-wide Climate Action Plan. In 2010, Chestertown government's facilities and operations produced 2,205 tons of greenhouse gas emissions, down 126 tons (or 5%) from 2009, and down 245 tons (or 10%) from 2008.

A Climate Action Committee, also known as the "green team", is comprised of more than ten citizens, the Mayor, and the Climate Action Coordinator from the Center for Environment & Society (CES) at Washington College, and has been meeting on a regular basis since 2007.

2. Adopt and enforce land-use policies that reduce sprawl, preserve open space, and create compact, walkable urban communities.

The Mayor has discussed these concepts as working town policies with the Planning Commission. Much of what Chestertown does in these areas must be in accordance with county and state policies. Kent County enforces strict land-use and open space policies, and the Town has resisted sprawl and development by adhering to those policies. CES hosted a week-long charette, or visioning process, for the possible annexation of the Clark Farm, a 500 + acre parcel just outside of Chestertown's municipal boundary, in October of 2007. This solidified the ties between CES and the Town and County, generated much new discussion among residents as to the desirability of sustainable, walkable neighborhoods, and limiting the scope of development. The Town Planning Commission has been working on policies that will support many of the desirable neighborhood and community qualities identified during the charette.

3. Promote transportation options such as bicycle trails, commute trip reduction programs, incentives for carpooling and public transit.

A public bus service is already in operation for parts of the Upper Eastern Shore: the MUST bus service. The Town has an approved plan for a rail-trail project that connects various sections of town via public trails which is expected to be completed by Spring 2012; and the Town promotes walking and biking in its public green campaign.

4. Increase the use of clean, alternative energy by, for example, investing in "green tags", advocating for the development of renewable energy sources, recovering landfill methane for energy production, and supporting the use of waste to energy technology.

With assistance from CES, the Town is exploring the use of a solar system, to supplement the electricity usage at the largest wastewater treatment plant. Discussions have been initiated in the Planning Commission over possible mandates for or encouragement of alternative energy sources. Similar discussions have been initiated with the Chestertown Historic District Commission and the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT) regarding the use of solar panels and other energy sources on historic buildings, which will likely require changes to the Town's Historic District Design guidelines and perhaps changes in MHT's policies for the state's Historic Preservation Tax Credit.

5. Make energy efficiency a priority through building code improvements, retrofitting city facilities with energy efficient lighting, and urging employees to conserve energy and save money.

Energy-efficient lighting has been installed in the Town's buildings. Town employees have been issued clear directives on conserving energy and saving money. The Town manager was able to work with the Town's electric supplier to obtain more energy efficient LED street lighting.

6. Purchase only Energy Star equipment and appliances for Town use.

This item has been adopted as official town policy by the Mayor and Council and is being followed.

7. Practice and promote sustainable building practices using the U.S Green Building Council's LEED program or a similar system.

The County has put into place a new position as a first step toward more rigorous code enforcement: Assistant Zoning Administrator and Code Enforcement Officer. The county is undertaking a review of all of its codes for alternative energy use and development. A review of the town's building codes is underway by the Planning Commission to find ways to include sustainable building practices in the code. Several new buildings being constructed in town have LEED certification and are using geothermal energy systems. As noted in Item 4 above, changes to the town's Historic District Guidelines are being considered to help promote green retrofits or upgrades to the town's historic building stock. It should be noted that historic district controls themselves may be considered green or sustainable policies, in that older houses are often more environmentally friendly than new construction, and the re-use of buildings is far preferable to demolition and replacement.

8. Increase the average fuel efficiency of municipal fleet vehicles; reduce the number of vehicles; launch an employee education program including anti-idling messages; convert diesel vehicles to bio-diesel.

Town employees have received directives about anti-idling, fuel saving tips, and saving money. As the Town's fleet is relatively small, and the budget for same even smaller, the Town must evaluate the need to replace each vehicle as it becomes necessary.

9. Evaluate opportunities to increase pump efficiency in water and wastewater systems; recover wastewater treatment methane for energy production.

The town completed installation of a multi-million-dollar upgrade to its wastewater system that includes an enhanced nutrient removal operation. The issues of pumping, municipal water, and wastewater capacity have moved to the forefront in review of development and annexation proposals. Several proposals have been received from solar companies interested in installing solar array systems at the Town's largest wastewater treatment facility.

10. Increase recycling rates in Town operations and in the community.

The Mayor gives recycling tips on her weekly radio show, as well as at town meetings. Recycling tips are offered in the local newspapers. The Town produced a newsletter that was distributed to all residents of Chestertown to provide residents with tips on recycling in the community. Efforts are underway to ramp up the recycling programs at all Kent County schools. CES and the Town collaborate in public events such the Kent County Home and Garden Show, and Earth Day. The Town now contracts with Infinity Recycling on an upgraded curbside pick-up program. The Mayor and Council adopted an ordinance that bars the waste disposal company from picking up any curbside waste that include newspapers or cardboard. The Mayor and Council also adopted a ban the use of single use, checkout plastic bags by large retail stores in town.

11. Maintain healthy urban forests; promote tree planting to increase shading and to absorb CO2.

The Town has long been recognized as a "Tree City USA" and has a long-standing Tree Committee. Chestertown recently received a grant from a local citizen to improve the tree canopy, as well as a grant from the State to replant and refurbish Wilmer Park and its environs. In addition, the Town and Washington College's CES collaborated on a successful grant proposal to the Chesapeake Bay Trust, and an urban greening plan has been prepared for the Town. This includes an inventory of the Town's trees and other vegetation based on analysis of satellite imagery by the College's GIS Laboratory (part of CES) and ground surveys by volunteers and staff. This study is complete and has been presented to the Town and provides tools with which to better plan new tree planting and the establishment of green corridors. The initiative will undertake demonstration tree planting in several parts of town. In addition, and most importantly, the project developed ordinances to better protect trees and make explicit requirements of all new development;

the Town Council approved new ordinances for cutting trees on private property, and voted them into law in July 2009. Plans have been drawn up for improvements to three specific parks in the Town: Rolling Road Park, Horsey Lane Remembrance Park, and Wilmer Park. Grant funds have been awarded to the Town for implementation of the Town's Community Forest Master Plan, which would result in a minimum of 2,000 trees being planted in the Town over the next four years (starting in late Fall, 2009). Funds will also be used to improve on the maintenance of the current tree inventory, and GPS/GIS mapping of new plantings added to the existing satellite imagery of the inventory.

12. Help educate the public, schools, other jurisdictions, professional associations, business and industry about reducing global warming pollution.

The Mayor informs the public about greening tips through her weekly radio show and during televised Town meetings. Green tips are printed in local newspapers and on the Town's "Chestertown Goes Green" website. A local bookstore now carries a full selection of "green" books and has a window display promoting green practices. At the Home & Garden Show, exhibitors featured environmentally-friendly gardening products and services (e.g., composting, rain gardens, planting native cultivars, and sensible water usage practices). The Mayor has met with the Superintendent of Public Schools to organize a series of environmental education programs through the State of Maryland's outreach programs. The Town's Climate Action Committee distributed tips for reducing energy usage to all residents of the community, and will enlist assistance from local business leaders to distribute a brochure to area businesses, informing them of global warming issues. A Neighbors for Neighborhoods program was launched voluntarily by citizens of the Town in order to model environmentally-friendly practices that other home-owners could follow. The Town recently was awarded the coveted Municipal Green Award by the Maryland Municipal League for jurisdictions under 10,000 population.