



US EPA's
GREEN COMMUNITIES
PROGRAM

PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY APPLICATION

US EPA REGION III
1650 ARCH ST
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103

APRIL 1999



US EPA'S GREEN COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

TABLE OF CONTENTS



- 1 WHAT DOES EPA MEAN BY A
“GREEN COMMUNITY” ?
- 2 WHY DID EPA DEVELOP THE
“GREEN COMMUNITIES” PROGRAM ?
- 2 WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS TO A
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATING IN THE
“GREEN COMMUNITIES” PROGRAM?
- 3 HOW TO APPLY TO BECOME A
“GREEN COMMUNITY”
- 4 HOW YOUR APPLICATION WILL BE EVALUATED
- 4 HOW YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED OF EPA'S
DECISION
- 5 APPLICATION



US EPA'S GREEN COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

WHAT DOES EPA MEAN BY A “GREEN COMMUNITY” ?

A Green Community is one which is working towards a sustainable future — a healthy environment, a strong economy, and a high quality of life for all its citizens. A sustainable community ensures its future by:

- 1) performing a community assessment
- 2) analyzing its trends
- 3) envisioning what it wants to be like in the future
- 4) developing action plans, and
- 5) then implementing its plans

Green Communities seek continuous improvement. Problems and solutions are viewed in a holistic way rather than on a project by project or issue by issue basis.

EPA's Green Communities Program is a voluntary program. Green Communities' goal is to encourage communities to build sustainable futures, incorporating environmental, economic and social considerations into planning and implementation activities. Committing to becoming a Green Community does not add new regulatory requirements or oversight by EPA. A Green Community does, however, strive to comply with all environmental regulations, promote economic equity, and actively involve citizens from all sectors of the community: local officials, business, industry, citizens, civic organizations, and more.

To be designated as a Green Community, a community must have completed the community assessment process, a trends analysis, a vision statement, developed sustainable action plans and have begun implementing actions that have been identified.

To help communities achieve these goals, EPA developed the Green Communities Assistance Kit, an Internet-based kit located at url: <http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/>. This web site provides a planning approach and a variety of tools and information that will help guide a community through the Green Communities process.



US EPA'S GREEN COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

WHY DID EPA DEVELOP THE “GREEN COMMUNITIES” PROGRAM ?

The Program was developed to:

- 1) educate communities (officials and citizens) in the concept of sustainability, and
- 2) act as an incentive to communities to do more than they might otherwise

It is expected that there will be broad stakeholder involvement throughout the process; and that the community will approach sustainability holistically, taking into account environmental, social, and economic issues.

Past accomplishments can be used to apply for designation as a participating Green Community. Designation, however, is not forever. A community will need to reapply every two years and show that they are making significant progress in achieving their goals in order to maintain their designation.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BENEFITS TO A COMMUNITY OF PARTICIPATING IN THE “GREEN COMMUNITIES” PROGRAM?



1. Prior to Designation

- *Training by EPA on the use of the Green Communities Assistance Kit
- *EPA and/or its partners will offer recommendations and highlight others' successful approaches that can be adapted to your community's particular needs

2. At Designation

- *A joint Community-EPA press release (increased visibility for your local sustainability initiatives)
- *A Green Communities certificate signed by the EPA Regional Administrator
- *A highway-approved city limit or town center sign that reads, “*Your Community, A Participating Green Community, in cooperation with US EPA and other sponsors*”
- *Your Success Story included in the Green Communities Assistance Kit

3. On-Going Benefits

- *Opportunities to learn through networking with others pursuing sustainability
- *Timely information about EPA grant funds that could help support your sustainability efforts
- *Status that can serve to leverage additional support and resources



US EPA'S GREEN COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

HOW TO APPLY TO BECOME A "GREEN COMMUNITY"

Who's eligible -

Any community in the United States that is working towards sustainability. Accomplishments from the past ten years (prior to application) count, too. A community might be a watershed, a municipality, a neighborhood. A Green Community is one that works together to achieve greater environmental protection, economic vitality and social well-being.

Deadlines -

There are none. Apply when you are ready. Applications will be accepted at any time.

Application fee -

It's free!

What to send in -

See attached application checklist (also available on the Internet at: www.epa.gov/greenkit/apply.htm)

Where to send it -

Susan McDowell (3ES10)
Green Communities Program
US EPA Region III
1650 Arch St.
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029

215-814-2739 (voice)
215-814-2783 (fax)
mcdowell.susan@epa.gov



US EPA'S GREEN COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

HOW YOUR APPLICATION WILL BE EVALUATED

Each completed application will be reviewed by EPA staff and at least one external Green Communities partner. Designation as a Participating Green Community will be based on the following criteria:

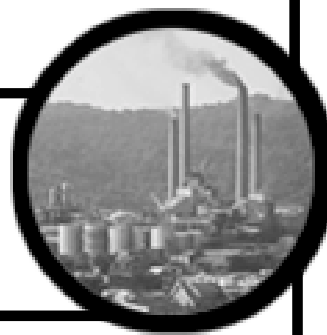
- A. Your community must have completed at a minimum:
 - *A Community Assessment (Community Profile)
[refer to http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/wher_int.htm]
 - *A Trends Analysis (Trends Statement)
[refer to <http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/2intro.htm>]
 - *A Visioning Process (Vision Statement)
[refer to <http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/3intro.htm>]
 - *Action Plans
[refer to <http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/4intro.htm>]

And, your community will have enacted some of the priority actions identified in your plans. However, it is not necessary for all of the activities in the Action Plans to have been completed in order to receive the designation.

- B. There is broad stakeholder involvement including citizens and representatives from local government, business, industry, etc.
- C. Your efforts look holistically at environmental, economic and social issues.
- D. You have formed partnerships and are leveraging resources to sustain your efforts.
- E. There is long-term viability and commitment to sustainability.
- F. You have built in incremental successes.
- G. You are measuring your progress.

EPA may request additional information and may visit your community prior to making a decision.

HOW YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED OF EPA'S DECISION



Once a decision has been reached, you will be notified by mail and by phone. If your community is not accepted, reasons will be given, and you will have the opportunity to reapply at a later time. If your community is accepted, EPA and the community will choose a date and place for the award ceremony.



US EPA'S GREEN COMMUNITIES PROGRAM

APPLICATION

Application Checklist

☐ **Part I: Community Information**

Part II: Accomplishments & Plans (Include Documentation)

- ☐ One-Page Summary
- ☐ Community Assessment (Where Are We Now ?)
- ☐ Trends Analysis (Where Are We Going ?)
- ☐ Vision Statement (Where Do We Want to Be ?)
- ☐ Action Plans (How Do We Get There ?)
- ☐ Implementation Activities (Let's Go !)

☐ **Part III: Green Communities Pledge**

☐ **Part IV: Letters of Recommendation**

Letters of recommendation from at least three local community-based organizations (a minimum of one environmental, one economic, and one civic organization).

SEND YOUR COMPLETED APPLICATION TO:

Susan McDowell (3ES10)
Green Communities Program
US EPA Region III
1650 Arch St.
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029
215-814-2739 (voice)
215-814-2783 (fax)
mcdowell.susan@epa.gov

PART I: COMMUNITY INFORMATION

Name of Applicant (municipality, watershed, neighborhood/town)

First Contact Person

Second Contact Person
(if applicable)

Name: _____

Title: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Fax: _____

E-Mail: _____

Web Site: _____

Briefly Describe Your Community (geographic boundaries, size, population, character, etc.). Include a map if available.

List Local Media (newspapers, radio & TV stations):

PART II: ACCOMPLISHMENTS & PLANS

- ☐ **Attach a One-Page Summary of Your Accomplishments & Plans.** Then complete the checklist below. Please enclose documentation of your actions (newspaper articles, a copy of your Vision Statement, etc.) and information on stakeholder participation, your use of sustainable indicators, and your use of the Green Communities Assistance Kit.

☐ **1. Community Assessment / Profile (Where Are We Now ?)**

Identifying the assets and liabilities that exist in your community is a good first step in determining what future actions need to be taken to protect and enhance your community's resources. Your community will have a wealth of information in various locations that can help to create a picture. Inventories are key components of an assessment. Don't forget to inventory key public and private policies, regulations, and activities that may support or contradict future sustainable actions.

As documentation, enclose a copy of your community assessment report, newspaper articles, and other pertinent materials.

Possible Actions Taken

- ☐ Identified information and data sources and people in the community that can contribute to the inventory of existing conditions.
- ☐ Held a workshop or other public forum to solicit knowledge and views from community members.
- ☐ Inventoried natural, cultural and economic resources (at a minimum) based on existing information.
- ☐ Mapped resources to reflect current conditions.
- ☐ Provided public access to the final Community Assessment via appropriate media (libraries, newspaper, radio, community groups, public places, etc.).
- ☐ Other _____

Refer to: http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/wher_int.htm

PART II: ACCOMPLISHMENTS & PLANS

☐ 2. Trends Analysis (Where Are We Going ?)

A community will benefit from evaluating current trends in environmental quality, economic viability, and social well-being, and projecting them into the future. This is a common tool of planning organizations. The result of such an analysis, a Trends Statement, can help pinpoint those trends that are unsustainable: those that in the long run will lead to increased environmental degradation, increased consumption of land by inappropriate development, the decline of local economies, and a lower quality of life. Likewise, the Trends Analysis can indicate ways in which the community is already moving towards sustainability.

As documentation, enclose a copy of your community's trends statement, newspaper articles, and other pertinent materials.

Possible Actions Taken

- ☐ Projected trends in the economy (number of vacant storefronts, % of citizens receiving public assistance, number of high-end technical jobs, etc.).
- ☐ Projected trends in natural resource conservation and use (acres of wetlands, open space, water quantity and quality, etc.).
- ☐ Projected social trends (education, housing, health, etc.).
- ☐ Communicated results of the Trends Analysis to the community at large and solicited feedback.
- ☐ Identified potential sustainability indicators to monitor based on the Trends Analysis.
- ☐ Other _____

Refer to: <http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/2intro.htm>

☐ 3. Vision Statement (Where Do We Want to Be ?)

The visioning process is a means for a community to envision its future — a future that reflects the values, aspirations and long-term commitments to restore and protect environmental, economic, and social assets now and into the future. Visioning, an inclusive process, gives community members the opportunity to answer the question, “Where do we want to be?” Through visioning, preferred scenarios are developed as a means of illustration. Green Communities’ visions consider and respect the community’s diversity and strive to improve the quality of life for all citizens, while protecting the environment, and strengthening the local economy. Indicators which will be used during implementation to measure the success of actions are further refined.

As documentation, enclose a copy of your community's vision statement and potential indicators, newspaper articles, and other pertinent materials.

Possible Actions Taken

- ☐ Designed and implemented a public outreach process to gather views from citizens on their visions for the community's future.
- ☐ Identified, illustrated, and presented to the community possible scenarios of the community's future (more than one scenario often helps to focus on particular themes or trends that need to be redirected).
- ☐ Developed a consensus-based Vision Statement.
- ☐ Refined sustainability indicators.
- ☐ Other: _____

Refer to: <http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/3intro.htm>

PART II: ACCOMPLISHMENTS & PLANS

☐ **4. Action Plans (How Do We Get There ?)**

Once a Vision has been developed, an action plan highlighting activities which need to be taken to achieve the vision can be designed. Many communities, in fact, will develop more than one action plan, with each plan addressing a specific facet of the community. For instance, there might be an action plan dealing with transportation, another dealing with historic preservation, and another dealing with waste management. The categories will vary according to the community's needs. When developing action plans, a community should keep in mind the question: Does this activity move us toward our vision and does it represent a sustainable solution to the issues identified? Green Communities seek innovative solutions to problems and engage the diversity of ideas, expertise, energy, and skills represented in the community. Bringing together a diverse group of people to recommend needed actions will lead to more balanced and thoughtful approaches for achieving the community's vision. Priorities for each action should also be considered and the group should factor in risk, the need for and the availability of funding, needed technical resources, and/or adequate local policies and regulations. Each action plan should include the expected resources needed to implement each action and indicators to measure progress.

As documentation, enclose a copy of your community's action plan(s), newspaper articles, and other pertinent materials.

Possible Actions Taken

- ☐ Designed and implemented a process to solicit ideas and recommendations from a broad cross-section of community members on actions that need to be taken and the tools to use.
- ☐ Discovered innovative approaches used by other communities that faced similar challenges.
- ☐ Forged partnerships and leveraged resources.

- ☐ Finalized measures of success / indicators that will track the commitments identified and keep the community moving toward its vision.

- ☐ Developed action plans that reflect the vision; may include actions to:

Prevent pollution and promote resource reuse and recycling

Protect sensitive areas including floodplains, wetlands, steep slopes, stream buffers, and living resource habitats

Direct growth and development to suitable areas

Protect water quality

Protect air quality

Promote transportation efficiency and diversity

Create economic opportunities in harmony with needs and environmental values

Reach out to citizens on a continuing basis to encourage voluntary actions consistent with the vision statement

Work cooperatively with other governments, and public and private organizations to encourage actions consistent with the plans

- ☐ Identified the necessary resources need to implement tasks in the action plans including:

Funding

Personnel & Organizational Structure

Technical Assistance

Technologies

Other Resources (specify)

- ☐ Established a timetable for implementation of the action plans
- ☐ Built incremental successes into the action plans
- ☐ Other _____

Refer to: <http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/4intro.htm>

PART II: ACCOMPLISHMENTS & PLANS

5. Implementing Action Plans (Let's Go !)

- ☐ Completed
- ☐ In Progress

A Green Community thrives on sustainable actions. The action plans that have been developed require careful community-based stewardship and shepherding in order to be successfully implemented. As actions are completed, Green Communities continue to revisit the Vision and periodically re-initiate a stakeholder process to refine or revise the Vision's goals and action plans in response to new conditions, new technologies, and new innovations. Successful completion of activities are celebrated by all.

As documentation, enclose a list of activities completed along with newspaper articles and other pertinent materials which verify the completion of activities laid out in the action plans.

Possible Actions Taken

- ☐ Secured the necessary resources needed to implement tasks in one or more action plans.
- ☐ Utilized some / all of the following principles in implementing one or more action plans (adapted from "Economic Development for the 21st Century: A Set of Principles," Copyright 1997, Local Government Commission, Sacramento, CA):

Integrated Approach (partnerships)

Vision and Inclusion (community goal setting with broad community involvement)

Poverty Reduction (social equity)

Retention Focus (keeping jobs and people in the community; consider local assets)

Local Focus (think globally, act locally)

Wired Communities (access to state-of-the-art communication technologies)

Industry Clusters (compatible industries, eco-industrial parks, etc.)

Long-term Investment (public investment and financial partnerships)

Human Investment (access to training, educational opportunities/day and elder care)

Corporate Responsibility (working in concert with community goals)

Environmental Ethic (consider future generations)

Smart Growth (avoid sprawl and invest in existing communities)

Compact Development (conserve open space)

Center Focus (keep business/downtown districts economically and socially viable)

Distinctive Community Identity (a sense of place)

Regional Collaboration (plan regionally; implement locally)

- ☐ Tracked measures of success / sustainability indicators.
- ☐ Revisited the Vision Statement.
- ☐ Updated the action plans.
- ☐ Other _____

Refer to: <http://www.epa.gov/greenkit/5intro.htm>

PART III: GREEN COMMUNITIES PLEDGE

Every Green Community must agree to a few simple terms. If you have read and agree to the following, please fill in your community's name, mark each box with an "X" and sign at the bottom.

We, the community of _____, _____ pledge that we: community's name state

- ☐ understand that continued participation in the Green Communities Designation Program is contingent upon showing substantial progress in implementing our community action plans,
- ☐ agree to strive for full compliance with all regulations promulgated by US EPA, the state and/or local jurisdictions,
- ☐ agree to promote the Green Communities Program and to share our success stories with other communities through the Green Communities Assistance Kit (web site), and
- ☐ understand that progress reports must be submitted to the Green Communities Program every two years if renewal is desired.

signature of 1st contact person title date

signature of 2nd contact person title date
(if applicable)

signature of 3rd contact person title date
(if applicable)

signature of 4th contact person title date
(if applicable)

PART IV: LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

Attach letters of recommendation from at least three local community-based organizations (a minimum of one environmental, one economic, and one civic organization).