

June 15, 2011

Karla Henderson
Planning and Facilities Group Executive
Office of Mayor Bing
2 Woodward Ave., Ste. 1126
Detroit, MI 48226

Marja Winters
Deputy Director
Planning & Development Department
65 Cadillac Square, Ste. 2300
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Karla and Marja:

Thank you both for participating in the May 5th Environmental Summit for the Detroit Works Project. The planning group appreciates the flexibility and patience you and your DWP colleagues demonstrated in working with us to prepare for the gathering.

As a follow up to the Summit, we are drafting a report of ideas and policy recommendations generated by participants. As promised, enclosed are: a working draft Executive Summary of that report, and a diagram of the values and principles commonly expressed during the Summit.

The Summit participants called for:

- *Building on rather than replacing*, based on the existing physical and human assets in neighborhoods;
- *A holistic, integrated approach to action*, with attention to health impacts, stewardship of resources and economic opportunities;
- *Opportunities for innovation and leadership*, i.e. demonstrating capacity and vision in the midst of challenges;
- *Efficiency, convenience, and ease of access for residents*, to maximize community engagement in the process;
- *Education, and policies that incentivize beneficial action while disincentivizing harmful action*, to achieve environmental outcomes.

As you may recall, the official “ask” of the Environmental Summit to the DWP is for:

- Names and departments of City officials who participated in the Summit;
- Feedback from DWP leadership on the event and the concepts and ideas presented—an honest assessment of how DWP will integrate this input as DWP moves forward;
- Designation of a person to continue as liaison with this planning group.

We will continue with community outreach on our end, and hope to hear from you by the end of June, and will contact your office on next steps.

With appreciation,
Sandra Yu

On behalf of the Environmental Summit Planning Group

Detroit Environmental Summit Report – Executive Summary – June 15, 2011

Introduction

Just as many aspects of urban development can cause environmental problems, their solutions can provide positive impacts on almost every area of life in the city. Environmentally sustainable and healthy measures stimulate the local economy, save significant amounts of money over time, and improve the quality of life for all Detroiters and residents of the metropolitan region. As Detroit revisions its future, it should pay close attention to community priorities and sustainability measures. Community-based decision-making, investment in existing assets, and prioritization of human and environmental well-being were examples of major priorities identified by participants in the recent Environmental Summit. The following document is a draft Executive Summary of a report being created to share core community values and policy recommendations for the City of Detroit and the Detroit Works Project.

Summit Vision

We believe that the environment and environmental justice define many aspects of life in Detroit, and that the need for a city transformation offers incredible opportunities to develop an innovative model of urban sustainability. The Environmental Summit was intended to be a step in the process of community engagement with the Detroit Works Process. The summit planners hoped to establish an open community forum where individuals concerned with Detroit's environmental health could meet around issue areas to share concerns, experience, and solutions. Our desired results were new connections between stakeholders, a definition of community core values and principles, and the launching point for a draft series of policy recommendations to address integrated solutions to environmental problems across all areas of life.

Event Overview

The Environmental Summit planning group was comprised of individuals from many local environmental justice and environmental organizations, community advocates, organizers, and members, and Community Legal Resources (CLR) staff. We met weekly over the course of several months on the Summit priorities, format, logistics, and outreach goals. We divided the time into a plenary session on the policy process and efforts existing in Detroit, three breakout discussion group sessions, and an informal meal. The Summit was held in Detroit on May 5, 2011, at Gleaners Food Bank. Attendees chose between air, land, water, or waste the first session; transportation, agriculture, or energy and buildings the second; and one of three concurrent discussions on integrated solutions in the final breakout, "Process for Change."

The Summit was a success with over 150 participants, including City officials, individuals working on environmental justice and environmental issues, community members at large, and several regional participants. CLR has created a report with Summit demographics, survey results, and a copy of event materials including an agenda and speakers list. This report will be made available on the Environmental Summit resource webpage and to key Detroit

agencies when. Summit planners created the resource webpage and will continue to update it as work continues; the address is <http://detroitenvsummit.blogspot.com/>.

Values and Principles

Summit participants vocalized many priorities, concerns, and ideas for their city. Attached is a diagram that shows some of these thoughts, arranged by issue area. Additionally, several principles emerged multiple times in every discussion session. These interconnected areas are displayed in the center of the attached graphic.

Big Ideas

What could Detroit's future look like? Detroit is first and foremost an urban center, and it can be a great model of a 21st century city that protects and harnesses the power of natural systems while cultivating its built environment to be beautiful, safe, healthy, clean, and vibrant through sustainable practices and policies.

While many topic-specific solutions were raised during the breakout discussions, we would like to emphasize the great opportunity for revitalization through integrative solutions – those which efficiently and effectively address multiple challenges by considering entire systems and the interactions between systems.

For example, rethinking the way our city deals with water can address issues of vacant land, water quality, neighborhood livability, access to planned open space, flooding, energy consumption, and more. The current model is that of an enterprise department, seeking to maximize payment for use of services. However, we can imagine an alternative scenario where we teach and encourage home- and business-based strategies such as rainwater collection or graywater systems for use in toilets and showers, irrigation, dishwashing and cleaning, thereby reducing the energy and maintenance costs of piping drinking water for those purposes. We can also optimize our parks, gardens, lawns, creeks, lawns, trees, roofs, alleys and expansive open space to serve as a natural infrastructure system to reduce summer urban heat¹ and filter stormwater back into our aquifers, keeping our streets dry, air clean, neighborhoods beautiful, river safe, and our wastewater treatment system a leaner, more efficient operation.

Next Steps

The Environmental Summit planning group plans to continue to work on creating policy recommendations and a full report. We will be reaching out to Summit participants and others who express an interest in continued work in these areas. Additionally, we reviewed the policy audits developed for Detroit Works and have several suggestions for ways to add to the consultants' work². We hope to establish ongoing open communication with key city Officials as the Detroit Works Project progresses and welcome the opportunity to participate in this process.

¹ <http://employees.oneonta.edu/baumanpr/efa/Images/Detroit%20UHI.jpg>

² <http://detroitenvsummit.blogspot.com/2011/05/policy-audit-summaries.html>