

# Sustainable Development

## *For a “green and growing” Capital Region*

BY JOHN IMES

Every day we hear that “green” is going mainstream due to concerns about risky sources of foreign oil, global warming and the impacts of climate change, energy costs, road congestion, food safety, water quality and other issues.

As a result, many businesses, communities and individuals are rethinking their approach and investing in more sustainable and self-reliant policies and practices to enhance our environment, economy and quality of life.

Recently, a cross-section of Capital Region leaders, representing businesses, local government, academia and nonprofit organizations, gathered to identify opportunities to foster more sustainable development. What is sustainable development? Very simply, “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This definition from the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development is still the most common one used today.

“Imagine Green Madison” was a three-day event organized by the University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies. Based on the Future Search process, the event helped diverse stakeholders come together to discover common purposes and values and commit to an implementation plan.

Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz addressed the conference and provided welcoming remarks.

Stakeholders worked hard to find common ground in 15 key areas and drafted statements that provide an ideal vision of sustainable development in the region. A few examples:

### Climate stewardship

“Our green Capital Region will neutralize our contribution to global warming and ensure healthy air, sustainable energy and transportation to strengthen our local economy and quality of life.”

### Open spaces

“We will protect from development urban and rural open spaces in the Capital Region. These spaces are crucial for food, fiber and fuel production; recreation; education; water recharge; biodiversity; and other aspects of our quality of life.”

### Sustainable economy

“Capital Region businesses, nonprofits and consumers will promote and actively participate in the green agenda.”

### Production and consumption of local, sustainable food

“Our community will understand and participate in the furtherance of local, sustainable food systems (markets,

retailing and farming) and consumption. People will know their growers. Businesses and institutions will adopt local buying processes into their ‘toolkits.’ Growers and producers are honored for being self-sufficient and in balance with the land.”

### Civic engagement and leadership

“An aware, educated public chooses among leaders who place green and sustainable policies and practices as the top priority on all levels: government, business, nonprofit and community. Candidates running for office and applying for leadership positions are all ‘green’ and educated on sustainability issues and consequences.”



## Clean water and sustainable water use

“Regional lakes, streams and rivers will be healthy for swimming and fishing and inviting for a wide range of recreational activities. Groundwater will be safe for drinking. Water use and withdrawal will be lower than its recharge within the region.”

## Green building and development

“Our built environment respects the natural environment. The places where we live, work, learn and play are sustainable, affordable, healthy and inspire a sense of well-being.”

The Imagine Green Madison conference is just one example in a long-term effort to create and implement new networks and partnerships to make the Capital Region a more sustainable place to live, work and play. It builds on the important sustainable community development work done by nonprofit groups like Sustain Dane and 1000 Friends of Wisconsin. Moreover, Madison’s adoption of the Natural Step sustainability framework and the emergence of eco-municipalities statewide, signals that local government can lead by example, set goals, and save energy and tax dollars by making wise use of resources.

We can develop new efforts that facilitate collaboration and more sustainable development across the entire Capital Region. The reward will be a new era of growth and prosperity, accompanied by significant improvements in our environment and quality of life. “Green and Growing” — it is up to all of us to work together for a healthy, vibrant and more sustainable Capital Region. ■

## Green-it-yourself resources

- Eco-municipalities: A Model for Sustainable Communities in Wisconsin: [www.1kfriends.org/Eco-Municipalities.htm](http://www.1kfriends.org/Eco-Municipalities.htm)
- Imagine Green Madison — New Partnerships for a Sustainable Community: [www.nelson.wisc.edu/outreach/imagine/](http://www.nelson.wisc.edu/outreach/imagine/)
- Sustain Dane: [www.sustaindane.org/index.htm](http://www.sustaindane.org/index.htm)
- Toward a Sustainable Community — A Toolkit for Local Government: [www.shwec.uwm.edu/sustk](http://www.shwec.uwm.edu/sustk)



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