

Full title of the subcommittee

Outreach Subcommittee

Chair of the subcommittee and SAC members of the subcommittee (number and names)

Chair: Lori Quillen. Other SAC participants: Shadi Khadivi, Ewa Sobczynska, and Kate Lawrence.

Any outside members of the subcommittee (number and names, and expertise they bring)

Several people outside of the SAC expressed interest, but to date they have not attended meetings. They include: Hilary Papineau (urban planner), Laurie Wheelock (legislative director), Mary Leciejewski (SUNY Albany Office of Sustainability), and Gary Rainstrom (management consultant).

Number of times the subcommittee has met

We've met twice, once in November and again in April.

Projects taken on by the subcommittee, anticipated timeline (can be very vague), and any milestones already reached. More detailed information would include a summary of each project/issue, how it came to light, recommendations or actions taken thus far, and anticipated future activity, as well as any partnership with or impact on correlating city department or program. Given the short timeline we are requesting this initial information, please feel free to send us a brief summary now and provide more detailed information in April.

See below.

Recommendations that the subcommittee would like to make to the city of Albany

The Outreach Subcommittee seeks to promote a culture of sustainability and connect Albany City residents with ongoing sustainability projects, practices, and resources. This includes increasing the visibility of existing programs and developing content to support emerging initiatives. Priorities are defined by the SAC and its Subcommittees; as such it is recommended that a member of the Outreach Subcommittee be present at each Subcommittee meeting.

Outreach success will require defining audiences and collaborating with likeminded sustainability partners throughout the city. Outreach efforts should be based on a dissemination plan and assessed on an annual or biannual basis, to measure engagement and impact. The SAC annual report should inform broader messaging.

Below are some specific recommendations.

1. Update the Mayor's Office of Energy and Sustainability (MOES) website:

www.albanysustainability.org

While the existing MOES website is a great foundation, it would benefit from content, audience, and messaging updates. These include: adding a "Sustainability 101" section written in accessible language, refreshing the resources section, expanding information on recycling and composting, developing the "Participate" section, framing the "Residents" section in a way that highlights economic and lifestyle incentives (i.e., NYSEERDA audits), spotlighting sustainability success stories, incorporating information on urban gardening and water gardens, and including students/educators as an audience. The site would also benefit from images that show a diversity of people embracing sustainable practices. There should also be ongoing assessment of the site using Google Analytics or a comparable tool that provides user metrics.

2. Expand social media presence

Currently, the Sustainability Advisory Committee's social media presence is via the Mayor's Office of Energy and Sustainability Facebook and Twitter feeds (@AlbanyEandS), which have 186 and 162 followers respectively. It would be worth exploring a catchier umbrella for these efforts (i.e., Sustainable Albany) and setting targets for engagement. Posts will likely need to be more interactive – and networked among partners – to generate a larger audience. Like the MOES website, great information is currently shared but there needs to be more of an ethos conveyed. We want residents to understand that sustainability is steeped in common sense – that it is good for individuals, the economy, and the environment.

3. Develop a quarterly e-newsletter

Content developed for Facebook and Twitter can be repurposed in a quarterly e-newsletter. Platforms like MailChimp allow for easy design and dissemination. They also provide metrics that facilitate assessment. Signup can be solicited on the MOES website and social media outlets, among other places.

4. Start an internship opportunity to help address items 1-3

The City of Albany currently has very limited capacity for enhanced communications. To augment this dearth, we recommend creating an ongoing internship in outreach/social media. This could be done in partnership with SUNY Albany. It would be worth exploring possible funding avenues.

5. Network with likeminded partners to maximize messaging

To amplify impact, whenever possible SAC outreach efforts should engage partners in messaging. Potential allies include state agencies, SUNY Albany's Office of Environmental Sustainability (UAlbany Green Scene), the Albany Protected Bike Lane Coalition, the Albany Bicycle Coalition, Historic Albany Foundation, Capital Roots, local businesses committed to green practices (i.e., Tierra Coffee), Radix Ecological Sustainability Center, Albany High School's Peace and Action Club (focuses on things like recycling and climate change), the Council of Albany Neighborhood Associations, Albany Public Library branches, etc.

6. Establish a presence at City of Albany Neighborhood Association Meetings

Identify several SAC members that are available to present sustainability priorities at neighborhood association meetings. A PowerPoint could be developed and shared among speakers. We could also make a tri-fold display and Sustainability 101 handout for residents that are unlikely to engage with digital communications.

7. Create an Education Subcommittee

Students and teachers are an important audience for the SAC; at present there is no easy way to holistically network among the city's public and private schools. If a committed group of individuals were to coalesce to create (standards-aligned) sustainability curriculum, it would help educate students and parents/caregivers. Albany City school children would benefit from exposure to schoolyard ecology/urban gardens, energy efficiency measures, and composting, among other things.