

City of Albany Sustainability Advisory Committee, Annual Report 2015-2016
Outreach Sub Committee Report

Current members: Lori Quillen (Subcommittee Chair), Ewa Sobczynska, Jennifer Viggiani, Kate Lawrence

Priorities

The Outreach Subcommittee (SC), as described in the SAC's 2014-2015 Annual Report, 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.

For 2015-2016, the Outreach SC outlined several priorities, including:

- Conducting broader outreach to Albany residents through the preparation of an overview PowerPoint and the identification of key stakeholders (Neighborhood Associations, Albany-based universities, other like-minded non-profits). The goal: to inform the public about SAC and its key priorities for 2015-2016; collect feedback on ongoing sustainability initiatives at grass-roots level; and enable stakeholder consultations.
- Enhancing public information on the following target areas: NYSERDA free energy assessment; solar options; and waste/composting options.
- Identify venues and platforms (such as social media) for broader SAC outreach.

What we accomplished

The Outreach SC was able to move forward on almost all of its outlined priorities. The SC was particularly successful in conducting the broader outreach and connecting with multiple stakeholders, initiated through presenting at Neighborhood Association meetings.

- Neighborhood Association (NA) meetings: The Outreach SC led on this initiative to broaden SAC's outreach to City of Albany residents and to inform them about our Annual Report. The main goal was to raise awareness about SAC and its activities as well as get a "pulse" on what sustainability concerns residents have. SAC members were present at eight NA meetings. Annex 1 summarizes the comments and concerns heard at each meeting, including the EXPO. Highlights include: interest in community solar, Citywide composting initiatives, and resident education on single-stream recycling. There was also great interest in bringing back the "chicken ordinance", supported by the Common Council members in attendance.
- Madison Theater collaboration: The Outreach SC helped to establish a collaboration with the Madison Theater to showcase a series of movies focused on issues of sustainability that were introduced and attended by the members of the Outreach SC as well as sponsors from other subcommittees. These included *Plant this Movie* (October 27, Scott Kellogg), *Urbanized* (November 24, Shadi Khadivi), *Chasing Ice* (Dec 15, Pete

Sheehan), Idle Threat (Jan 26, Pete Sheehan and Sandy Misiewicz), and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid: The Loss of an Ecosystem (July 14, Lori Quillen).

- Earth Day EXPO: The Outreach SC also facilitated the participation of SAC in the Earth Day Expo and Bike Parade organized by the Sierra Club and the Albany Bicycle Coalition on April 17. SAC was an official sponsor of the event and participated in the Speaker's Corner. Outreach SC liaised with the event's organizers and assisted with promotion of the event at the Neighborhood Association meetings and through social media.
- Social media platforms: Facebook and Twitter. In early April, the Outreach SC started a Facebook page for the SAC, [Sustainable Albany](#). It is also linked with a Twitter account (currently not managed), [Sustainable518](#). Within less than a month, the Facebook page was able to garner close to 200 likes. The current count as of early July is at 226 likes. The SC managed about 120 posts over the past 3 months (original content and reposts), with multiple posts reaching audience of over 400 (to over 1,000). The Facebook page highlights upcoming local events related to sustainability where public can attend or voice their opinions, local (and national) newspaper articles, and re-posts of other like-minded non-profits events and other highlights. Photos of recent events, attended by SAC members, were also posted.
- Other attendance: Outreach SC has attended a number of additional meetings, including the South End Bikeway Link (May 2016) and Complete Streets (June 2016).
- Outreach SC meetings: The SC held 2 official meetings open to the public (December 2, 2015 and May 11, 2016).

Going forward

Outreach SC plans to continue to network with the community through presentations at Neighborhood Association meetings, and plans to expand engagement to other local non-profits (including universities). Our Facebook page will continue to be an important tool in this regard. Next year's priorities will be defined in Fall 2016, but additional focus on areas identified during NA meetings (composting, recycling, energy efficiency) might be important next steps. At the last public SC meeting, it was suggested that we tap into sustainability indicators for the City (based on data already being collected) to create a simple "sustainability scorecard." This suggestion has a lot of appeal as a tool for education and outreach.

Annex 1

Spring 2016: SAC outreach to Neighborhood Associations

1. Center Square NA (March 17): Interest in solar energy options in neighborhood (beyond rooftop) – such as community solar. In addition, residents mentioned other infrastructure needs such as repainting of crosswalks and potholes; water quality was also brought up. Attended: Ewa Sobczynska, Lori Quillen, Kate Lawrence
2. Mansion NA (March 23): Electric heat is a problem in the South End neighborhood, which is primarily made up of low-income rentals. It is cheaper to install electric baseboards rather

than gas heat, so landlords in the neighborhood overwhelmingly chose this option. Unfortunately, that means that the low-income tenants must struggle with excessively high electricity bills and they have no option to change this. One resident requested that there be more information/outreach about single stream recycling. She felt that she didn't trust that the single stream technology really works and struggles with making the effort to recycle. Citywide composting was brought up. Council member in attendance, Vivian Kornegay, vowed to carry the chicken legislation (brought up by SAC as part of Urban Agriculture SC). Attended: Jillian Kasow, Ewa Sobczynska

3. Helderberg/New Scotland Meeting (April 7)- Concerns about making electronics recycling accessible to residents without vehicles, concerns about trash fees, interested in seeing more composting options, interested in city efforts to recycle 'gray' water, mention of Normanskill as an underused resource, update on Trash Committee provided by Common Council member Judy Doesschate (waste study, pilot plan for larger recycling containers and new trucks for certain parts of the City). Interest in chicken legislation. Attended: Ewa Sobczynska, Lori Quillen
4. Sherdian Hollow (April 11) – SAC members provided a more detailed update on the Energy SC work with AHP in Sheridan Hollow on bringing solar micro-grid. Handouts provided on energy assessment. Interest in chicken legislation. No follow-up discussion with NA as a whole but during one-on-one discussion after the meeting residents inquired about follow-through on energy assessments (ensuring the report is received from the contractor) and how to determine which solar options are best for residents (also what to do with trees from neighboring properties when interested in solar). There was also discussion about the contaminants (mercury?) in Sheridan Hollow soil that prevents them from doing urban agriculture (they have plots). Attended: Ewa Sobczynska, Peter Sheehan
5. Delaware Meeting (April 14) - Concerns about trash fees and incentives to recycle and compost, interest in getting city schools to become more sustainable (mention of styrofoam trays), picked up flier about Normanskill, a site worthy of more PR (Louise McNeilly from Delaware NA is closely involved). Interest in chicken legislation. Attended: Ewa Sobczynska, Lori Quillen
6. EXPO (April 16 - Concerns about recycling in city apartments - general feeling that despite the efforts of tenants, landlords might not be disposing of trash properly. Attended: Lori Quillen, Jillian Kasow
7. CANA (May 4) – The following issues were raised by attendees: Improving broadband access as an issue for SAC; involving Albany Public Schools in SAC activities (Energy SC outreach was mentioned); storm water run-off; increasing awareness refuse and composting (increasing awareness); areas of Albany subject to flooding; closure of landfill; Sherdian Hollow grant; green roofs (encouraging with incentives and policy change – ReZone efforts); enforcement for recycling; pilot project for larger recycling bins; joint solar projects (community solar). Attended: Jillian Kasow, Ewa Sobczynska

8. South Park (May 25) – short presentation; other agenda items referred to green spaces and community gardens; quality of life for the residents; the efforts of Albany Med to encourage employees to use public transit. Attended: Sandy Misiewicz, Ewa Sobczynska
9. Pine Hills (June 16) – recycling (also enforcement of recycling in residential areas, larger buildings), trees maintenance, seeclickfix (other agenda items); composting and raising awareness among residents about the opportunities available; lack of permeable surfaces/covering residents' entries of way by asphalt/resurfacing. Attended: Ewa Sobczynska, Lori Quillen