



425 Sixth Avenue, Suite 1335 · Pittsburgh, PA 15219

## ***Staying on the Path to Sustainability***

Sustainability is a process of continuous improvement where social, environmental, and economic values are simultaneously advanced. It is a process of continuously asking questions and course correcting. Sustainable Development is a product or outcome of this questioning, taking a systems view, connecting the dots and being agile to change.

At Sustainable Pittsburgh, while our focus is generally on the region, businesses, and communities, we are often asked what a person can do to accelerate sustainability in their own lifestyles. The following attempts to inventory ideas we hope you will find helpful. What's missing? Feel free to **email your thoughts** to us. More information can be found on these ideas by simply searching online.

By the way, this *Staying on the Path to Sustainability* list has similarities to a project we developed a couple years ago and are presently reviving under the new Sustainable Community Development Network. Check out **sc500.org** for case studies of innovative sustainable community solutions from around our region and a sustainable decision-making checklist.

### Social

#### *Diversity*

- Mentor someone of a different ethnic/religious group
- Provide opportunities for all and narrow the gap in access, services, quality of care, etc.
- Assist disadvantaged groups
- Join groups (e.g., arts, sports, religion) or a project likely to lead to making new friends of different race, ethnicity or different social class

### *Equity*

- Treat others with respect and equality

### *Human Capital*

- Attend school
- Read the newspaper
- Read books
- Take a walk
- Call a friend or family member
- Cut back on TV/Internet use
- Exercise
- Meditate
- Teach your children
- Enjoy nonmaterial pleasures
- Put silence into each day
- Play outside
- Tutor someone
- Mentor a youth
- Care for someone in need
- Try paddling, camping, biking or other outdoor recreational activities

### *Human Services*

- Volunteer
- Donate blood
- Give to your local food bank
- Provide healthy and safe working environments
- Thank a social worker

### *Social Capital*

- Organize a social gathering in your neighborhood
- Attend town meetings
- Plan a vacation with friends or family
- Organize/participate in a sports league or other club
- Attend PTA meetings
- Support a cause
- Answer surveys when asked
- Help your neighbors
- Participate in political campaigns
- Offer to serve on a committee
- Say hello to strangers
- Say Thank you
- Increase awareness about crime prevention
- Improve street-scaping and remove graffiti and litter
- Help children prepare for school

- Help children with homework
- Increase access to information
- Implement/Volunteer/Send kids to an after-school program
- Register to vote and do it
- Start a lunch gathering or a discussion group with co-workers

## Environment

### *Clothing*

- Substitute dry cleaning with Wet Cleaning, CO2 Cleaning, or GreenEarth Cleaning
  - o *Chemicals used for dry cleaning are categorized as a "probable carcinogen" by the Environmental Protection Agency and can be harmful to the environment and your health.*
- Buy a front load washer
  - o *They are designed to conserve energy and water and are gentler on clothing.*
- Wash clothes in cold water
  - o *Hot water use is more expensive and harsher on clothing.*
- Remove clothing from dryer before cycle ends
  - o *Reduces energy and extends clothing life-span*
- Avoid "wash separately" clothes
- Buy natural fiber clothing
- Extend the life of your clothing and shoes
- Buy from thrift shops
- Donate to a thrift shop
- Use low-phosphate or phosphate-free detergent
- Buy organic clothing

### *Ecosystem*

- Create, save, reclaim, or maintain a healthy habitat for native plants and animal species
- Encourage a positive attitude toward environmental stewardship
- Dispose of cigarette butts in an appropriate receptacle
- Dispose of hazardous household waste products at the proper facility
- Put up nesting boxes for native birds
- Start a backyard wildlife habitat project
- Donate to environmental organizations

### *Energy*

- Buy Energy Star appliances
- Turn equipment off when it is not in use

- Plug your TV, DVD player, VCR and stereo into a power bar. When you turn them off, turn off the bar, so they won't be drawing "phantom power" while you're not using them
- Line-dry clothes
- Air dry dishes
- Use a programmable thermostat
- Switch out incandescent light bulbs for Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFL) or Light Emitting Diode (LED) lights
- Use both sides of paper
- Carbon offset your lifestyle
- Purchase renewable energy
- Ensure your home is properly insulated

### *Food*

- Buy locally grown food
- Eat seafood that is sustainable (i.e.: abundant populations, hook and line fishing method, low impact on natural habitat)
- Buy organic
- Avoid or peel fruits with high residue levels
- Wash fruits and vegetables (commercial washes available)
- Grow your own food
- Buy fair trade products
- Drink shade grown coffee
  - o *Usually grown organically, shade trees filter CO2, provide habitats for species and protect against erosion.*
- Reduce or cut out meat consumption
  - o *Being vegetarian reduces the use of fossil fuels, forest-clearing for raising livestock, and methane gas into the environment.*
- Compost leftover coffee grounds, produce scraps, leaves, and grass clippings.
- Buy products containing non-GMO (genetically modified organism) or non-GEO (genetically engineered organism)
- Eat unprocessed/unpackaged food whenever possible.
- Buy "free-range" products

### *Home*

- Stop unwanted junk mail, telemarketers, catalogs
- Prepare dishes that will provide several meals
- Reduce housecleaning
- Install roof and ridge vents
  - o *Reduces accumulated air heat*
- Seal off laundry room
  - o Prevents heat from escaping into the rest of the home
- Insulate water heater

- Check for drafts
- Install door sweeps
- Purchase a tankless water heater
  - o *Energy efficient by only burning gas when needed*
- Replace furnace filters regularly
- Use non-toxic cleaning supplies
- Install lights sensors
- Buy products in bulk
- Use paints with low VOC emissions
- Purchase bleach-free toilet paper that is made from the highest post-consumer waste content you can find
- Build or incorporate green building practices in your home or business
- Recycle ink cartridges
- Use recycled ink cartridges

#### *Lawn and Garden*

- Water your lawn only when it needs it
- Deep-soak your lawn
- Water during the early parts of the day
- Avoid watering when it's windy
- Put a layer of mulch around trees and plants
- Use efficient watering systems
- Plant trees, vines and shrubs (they can be used to shade your home and reduce your energy bills)
- Grow a vegetable garden
- Make compost
- Use reel mowers
- Leave clippings on the lawn.
- Use a fertilizer with time-released, water insoluble nitrogen
- Keep pesticide/herbicide use to a minimum or do not use at all
- Control lawn weeds with corn gluten
- Plant groundcover (annuals, perennials, fruits, vegetables, herbs, ornamental grass)
- Drip irrigation
- Practice integrated pest management
- Plant only native species
- Set up a worm bin
- Use rain barrels
- Plant wildflowers to replace lawn

#### *Recycling/Reuse*

- Join the Freecycle™ movement
- Buy recycled products
- Participate in your municipal recycling program

- Help start a recycling program if one does not exist in your municipality, school, office, place of worship, etc.
- Use reusable dishware instead of plastic ware
- Donate used building materials
- Recycle old tires, appliances, electronics, bicycles, etc!
- Practice the three R's – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

### *Shopping*

- Consider shopping online and using ground transport
  - o *Reduces number of trips in the car to different stores, helps reduce storage space for inventory, saves time.*
- Save order information on disk instead of paper.
- Buy durable goods
- Purchase products with minimal packaging to reduce waste
- Use reusable canvas bags instead of plastic or paper
- Buy used books, clothing, etc.

### *Transportation*

- Consolidate trips to the store
- Avoid "Jack-rabbit" starts and hard braking
- Drive steadily at posted speed limits
- Avoid idling your vehicle
- Make sure your tires are properly inflated
- Use your air conditioner sparingly
- Use the cruise control
- Service your vehicle regularly
- Park in shady areas when possible
- Make a commitment to drive less
- Buy a hybrid car
- Take public transit
- Carpool
- Ride a bike
- Fill up the gas tank when it's cool outside
- Telecommute (work from home)
- Move closer to work

### *Water*

- Check for leaks
- Put plastic bottles or float booster in your toilet tank
- Insulate your water pipes.
- Install water-saving shower heads and low-flow faucet aerators
- Take shorter showers.
- Turn off the water between washing hand/brushing teeth/washing dishes, etc.

- Use your dishwasher and clothes washer for only full loads
- Use a rain barrel
- Plant a rain garden in your yard
  - o *Helps to filter pollutants from runoff, removes standing water, recharges local groundwater*

## Economy

- Host/attend a yard sale
- Maintain a budget
- Save money
- Reduce costs
- Learn about programs such as mortgage subsidies for energy-efficient homes
- Use the library
- Consider the real cost of everything you buy. Think about the resources, production and packaging, and waste they generate
- Use money saved to do something fun with your family
- Buy carbon offsets
- Start a business
- Invest in local businesses
- Support local businesses
- Use coupons
- Investigate and invest environmentally and socially responsibly