

# Sustainable Community Essentials

# Rapid Assessment

## for Southwestern Pennsylvania

Municipal Managers and Secretaries around the region were invited to complete the Sustainable Community Essentials Rapid Assessment over a six-month period at the beginning of 2011. 125 municipalities have responded thus far. The results provide insight to the pace and precedent for the uptake of the policy and practice of sustainable development around the region across fourteen essential categories and ninety-one specific actions. The data illuminates need and opportunity. Accordingly, Sustainable Pittsburgh and partners have identified shared priorities and an ambitious line-up of education and best-practice sharing programs. The following is a high level summary of the Rapid Assessment insights. These will be key to our plans to evolve the Rapid Assessment Program into a formal Sustainable Community Certification Program in 2012.

## Governance

### Progress

Stated essentials of coordination between neighboring municipalities and encouraging active civic engagement and public participation received high positive response rates of 64% and 55% respectively.

### Potential

Only 13% responded positively in having adopted sustainability policies and goals through an officially designated sustainability program. 11% have charged a municipal employee to carry out such policies and only 6% measure and track these program outcomes.

## Land Use and Community Design

### Progress

Community residents are afforded opportunities to create a community vision and track progress has been successfully coordinated among 42% of respondent municipalities. Professional staff understands or consults such expertise on the criteria of good design as indicated by 61% of respondents. 52% retain professional staff to manage land use programs. 41% indicated that their comprehensive land use plan addresses impacts to neighboring communities and incorporates sustainability principles. 53% operate under up-to-date ordinances for zoning. 18% of municipalities responded that they are taking steps to ensure their development plans include pedestrian-oriented, dense, walkable, mixed-use development (34% indicated that their plans already do so.)

### Potential

63% of respondents indicated that they had not adopted the Pennsylvania Keystone Principles for Growth, Investment, and Resource Conservation.

## Expanding Housing Choice and Addressing Blight

### Progress

50% of respondents indicated they are working towards or are putting blighted properties back into productive use through smart rehab codes, conservatorship, demolitions, green lot strategic, etc. 72% indicated that zoning ordinances provide for a full range of housing opportunities and 77% responded that the upkeep of building and maintenance codes is a priority they have or are working towards.

### Potential

57% either have or are working towards maintaining an inventory of blighted properties. Only 19% of respondents indicated their municipalities provide or are working to provide support to facilitate homeownership through programs that incorporate homebuyer incentives, employer-assisted housing, and community land trusts. 83% responded that there has not been a recent evaluation of occupation and wage profiles to assess progress in ensuring that current housing is affordable to workers in the locality. 31% of municipalities' comprehensive plans address the community benefits of and need for expanding housing choice.

## Water and Stormwater Management

### Progress

41% of respondents indicated that water providers are improving services to developed areas with an effort to not facilitate sprawl. In addition, 41% listed that cooperation among municipalities is occurring to increase cost-efficiency in distribution and treatment of the water supply. 45% responded that on-site detention and infiltration of stormwater is encouraged and the use of retention basins is being discouraged. 54% responded positively they're coordinating with other municipalities to create and implement a stormwater management plan.

### Potential

34% indicated they either don't know or do not work with neighboring municipalities to cost-efficiently manage water supply, treatment, and distribution. 43% either do not know or do not encourage on-site detention and infiltration of stormwater. 26% either do not know or have not supported creation and implementation of a stormwater management plan. 49% responded that their municipality does not actively encourage water conservation and efficiency measures in the community and among businesses.

## Waste Management and Recycling

### Progress

51% responded that there is a written recycling and waste reduction ordinance for their municipality's commercial, residential, and institutional facilities. 61% have a curbside recycling program in place and 50% have an active informational program to encourage citizens to reduce waste and recycle. 53% enforce recycling ordinances and regulation in accordance with Pennsylvania Act 101 that mandated municipal recycling across the state.

### Potential

57% of municipalities do not work with schools to engage students on waste reduction and recycling. 48% have yet to expand material recycling programs to include e-waste, composting, pharmaceuticals, and household hazardous waste for community-wide collection.

## Mobility and Alternative Fuels

### Progress

51% are either working to or have committees dedicated to developing trails for walking and cycling that connect to main activity areas. 54% are working on or have evaluated traffic calming techniques, complete streets, and access and congestion management programs.

### Potential

26% of municipalities promote and facilitate public transportation and ride sharing along with transit-oriented development. 71% indicated alternative fuel developments and businesses are not being cultivated. 62% do not have a Share The Road education campaign on the rights and responsibilities of bicyclists on the roads.

## Healthy Communities

### Progress

69% of respondents promote outdoor recreation opportunities, amenities, and lifestyles.

### Potential

47% of municipalities do not have programs to address the concerns of healthy communities in the areas of exercise programs, feeding programs for the elderly and children, crime watch, accessible health care, etc. Only 30% of land use management programs are used to advance community health and well-being.

## Local Economies and Main Street Revitalization

### Progress

57% of municipalities support or are working to support a fair and competitive business climate that builds community.

### Potential

58% of municipalities do not have ordinances to foster locally owned enterprises, green businesses and jobs, and discourage big box retailers. Only 14% promote policies and plans investing in the core and discouraging investment in greenfields.

## Air Quality

### Progress

60% of municipalities either have or are working on developing or maintaining trails for walking and bicycling. 46% of municipalities enforce and promote compliance of anti-idling laws.

### Potential

49% of municipalities are not accommodating and promoting alternative transportation methods. Only 7% offer readily accessible public education regarding emissions. 73% have not initiated green vehicle fleet assessment and vehicle right-sizing practices.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

### Progress

56% of municipalities have taken extra measures to ensure wide ranges of candidates are interviewed for all job vacancies. 53% have reviewed their comprehensive and zoning plans to ensure housing is within reach of all people is accommodated throughout the community.

### Potential

41% of municipalities do not pursue Minority Business Enterprise and Women Business Enterprise with regard to purchasing bids and contracts. 56% do not have a written municipal ordinance prohibiting discrimination and valuing diversity and inclusion. Only 3% have a diversity committee and program requiring diversity training for municipal employees.

## Energy Conservation and Green Building

### Potential

49% of municipalities have recently completed an energy study of all municipal building and operations.

### Potential

83% of municipalities have not created incentives to promote green buildings. 82% have not established a greenhouse gas inventory and mitigation plan for municipal functions. 62% have not reviewed ordinances in order to remove impediments to the use of renewable energy installations or green buildings.

## Environmentally Sensitive, Civic, and Historic Places

### Progress

57% of municipalities either have or are working towards having a plan that identifies environmentally sensitive, ecologically significant, and civic/historic places.

### Potential

48% of municipalities do not have a written policy with ordinances and incentives to conserve environmentally and ecologically sensitive places. 70% of municipalities do not have an active Historic Review Commission to protect and maintain historically and architecturally significant buildings.

## Food Security and Local Production

### Progress

44% of municipalities responded that their comprehensive plan and ordinances protect farmland, discourage sprawl, and facilitate redevelopment of existing places.

### Potential

54% of municipalities do not have incentives for establishment of farms and gardens, including Right-To-Farm regulations. 12% have or are working towards having an active Buy Fresh, Buy Local Committee. 62% do not have education programs for residents on the benefits of organic, locally purchased food and are not facilitating farmers' markets and stands.

## Education

### Progress

68% of municipalities support efforts to include the school and community. 60% coordinate or are working to coordinate community planning with the school district, while actively engaging the well being of the district by providing programming, leadership, and partnerships.

### Potential

26% do not cooperate with community and local public schools to share facilities and other resources.