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**TO: COUNCIL MEMBER KENNETH V. COCKREL
AND THE GREEN TASK FORCE**

**FROM: Kathryn Lynch Underwood, City Planning Commission *KLU*
Khalil Mogassabi, Urban Design Unit, Planning and Development
Department
Laura Buhl, City Planning Commission
Janese Chapman, Historic Designation Advisory Board**

DATE: June 28, 2010

RE: Status Report on the Comparative Analysis of Green Building Policies

During the May 27, 2010 meeting of the Green Building Subcommittee of the Green Task Force, the City Planning Commission (CPC) was asked to conduct a comparative analysis of green building policies. CPC staff has been working with the Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB), the Planning and Development Department (PDD) and others on the Sustainable Community Codes and Policies Workgroup to examine obstacles, create incentives and develop standards to facilitate sustainable development in the city. The core departmental group of that workgroup is taking on the task as requested by Council Member Cockrel. This memo is a status report on what we have done to-date.

Green building policies from all over the country are being examined, noting whether or not there are similarities in climate and other factors that may be relevant. Thus far we have collected information on 15 cities, including:

- Ann Arbor, Michigan,
- Auburn Hills, Michigan,
 - Chicago, Illinois,
 - Denver, Colorado,
 - Fort Collins, Colorado,
- Grand Rapids, Michigan,
 - Henderson, Nevada,
- Las Vegas, Nevada,
 - Los Angeles, California,
 - New York, New York,
 - Phoenix, Arizona,

- Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania,
- San Diego, California,
- San Francisco, California, and
- San Jose, California.

We will also look at green building projects proposed or completed in the city of Detroit, as well as what the City has accomplished without a policy in place.

What is a “sustainable” or “green” building?

The following two working definitions from recycleworks.org well capture the meaning and intent of “sustainable” and “green” building:

“Sustainable building integrates building materials and methods that promote environmental quality, economic vitality, and social benefit through the design, construction and operation of the built environment. Sustainable building merges sound, environmentally responsible practices into one discipline that looks at the environmental, economic and social effects of a building or built project as a whole. Sustainable building design encompasses the following broad topics: efficient management of energy and water resources, management of material resources and waste, protection of environmental quality, protection of health and indoor environmental quality, reinforcement of natural systems, and the integration of the design approach.”

“Green building is the practice of creating structures and using processes that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient throughout a building’s life-cycle from siting to design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation and deconstruction. This practice expands and complements the classical building design concerns of economy, utility, durability, and comfort. Green building is also known as a sustainable or high performance building.”

Preliminary Trends and Similar Components of Green Building Policies

Even though we are still collecting and reviewing policies and plans, there are similarities and trends emerging, including:

- Green building policies are not stand-alone policies, but are part of more comprehensive climate action and/or sustainability plans.
- There is a shared philosophy that local government must lead by example.
- Dealing with green buildings and other aspects of sustainability has been given a certain level of priority through such actions as appointment of a sustainability director; designation of a specific office; and/or through creation of boards, commissions or authorities.
- Energy efficiency and water conservation are mandated through policies and ordinances.
- Various incentives are instituted to facilitate green practices.
- Renewable energy is actively promoted.

- An education component for municipal employees, developers and the community is integral.
- Government, community, business, and institutional collaboration is integral.
- LEED standards and/or certification are widely instituted.
- Specific and measurable objectives within a specific timeline are set.
- Mechanisms for measuring progress, successes and challenges are put in place.
- Websites, downloads, links and other information is made readily available to the public.

We will continue our review and analysis of green building policies and update the Task Force as we progress. Please contact us if you have any questions.