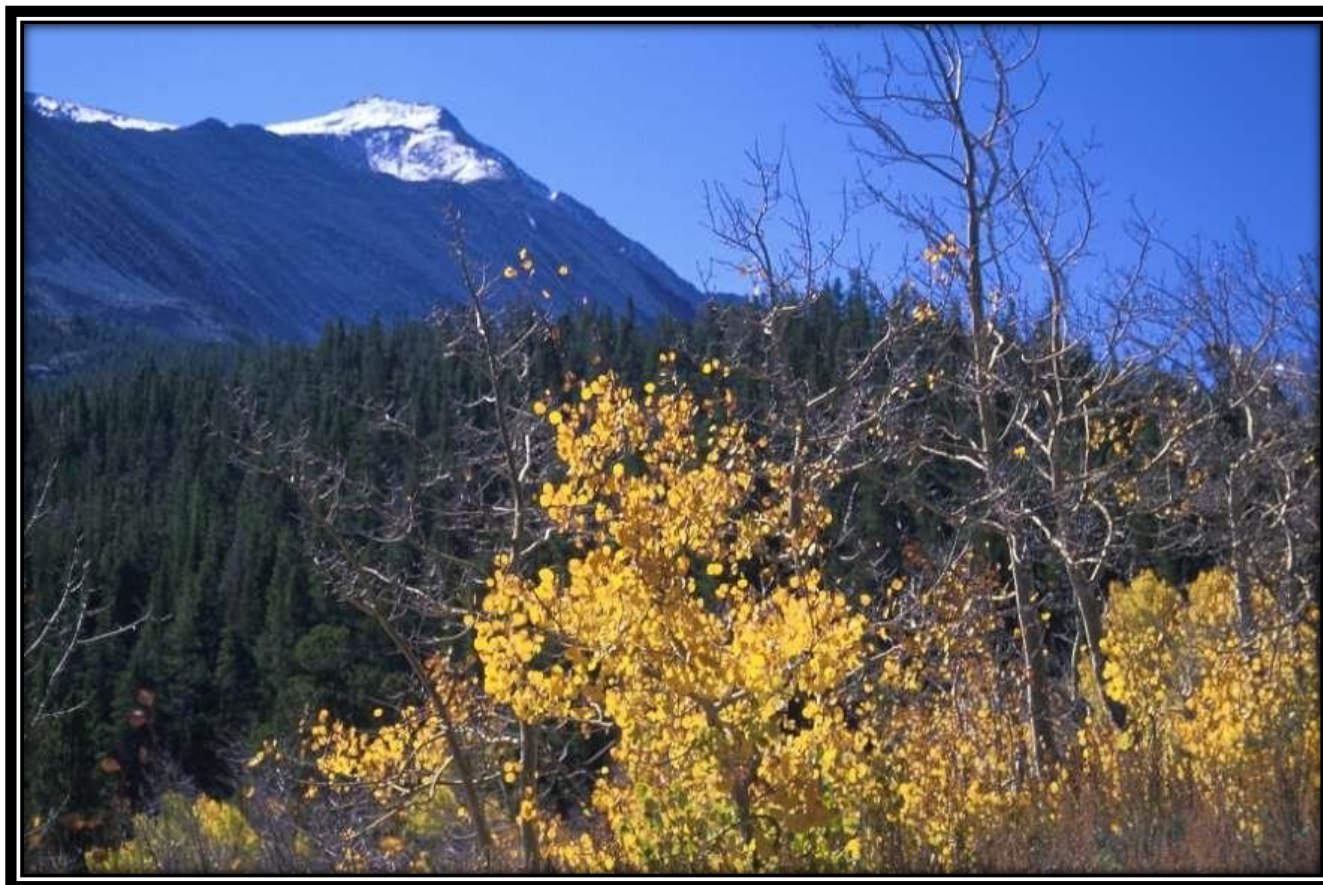


Case Studies in Sustainable Communities

A periodic publication showcasing model communities and frameworks used by local governments and citizens to achieve sustainability visions



SIERRA NEVADA ALLIANCE

Keeping light in the range.

Acknowledgements

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Sierra Nevada Alliance

The Sierra Nevada Alliance is a non-profit networking organization serving over 85 conservation groups in the Sierra. The Sierra Nevada Alliance has been protecting and restoring Sierra land, water, wildlife and communities since 1993. The Alliance unites hundreds of individuals and conservation groups to protect Sierra resources for future generations, while promoting sustainable communities. The Alliance is driven by a vision of a Sierra where natural and human communities coexist in harmony: a Sierra where residents and visitors alike understand and value the unique qualities of the range and protect the places they love. We strive to build the capacity of our member organizations, while leading regional campaigns to protect and restore Sierra lands, water, wildlife and rural communities. In 2009, the Alliance introduced the Sustainable Sierra Communities Program. The goal of the Sustainable Sierra Communities program is to foster and support local actions and planning that establish building blocks for more resilient, thriving Sierra communities. Through on-the-ground projects, innovative programs, publications, workshops, and events, we empower local action for a sustainable future. The Sierra Nevada is known for its rich rural character, but now more than ever, we face challenges that threaten our natural landscapes, resources and way of life. To meet current challenges, the Alliance is exploring grassroots-oriented solutions in the Sierra by encouraging Sustainable Communities.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Case Study 1	
<i>Transition Towns</i>	6
This international network of communities includes over 70 Transition Towns in the U.S. Find out what Transition Towns are and how this sustainability framework could be applied in the Sierra.	
Case Study 2	
<i>Nevada City, California</i>	14
This case study highlights a sustainability movement in a Sierra Nevada community that began with a small group of organized and passionate citizens. The grassroots effort by the Alliance for a Post Petroleum Local Economy (APPLE) blossomed into a collaborative effort that included local government, on-the-ground projects, and a new center for sustainable living.	
Case Study 3	
<i>Sustainable Northampton</i>	20
This town illustrates the process of community visioning, planning and action. Sustainable Northampton began when Mayor Mary Clare Higgins of Northampton, Massachusetts initiated a visioning process that led to a comprehensive Sustainability Plan with actions and specific targets.	
Conclusion	27

INTRODUCTION

“Sustainability” is becoming a household term, and many communities are working to discover how the term applies to them. There are several accepted academic definitions of sustainability and several commonly identified sectors under the sustainability umbrella that local agencies, organizations and individuals are actively working on. These sectors include: climate change, energy efficiency and renewable energy, transportation, local food, water quality and conservation, waste recycling, open space and habitat conservation and more. According to the most common definition, sustainability is achieved with solutions that meet the needs of today, while ensuring *environmental* health, *social* well-being and *economic* viability for future generations. The notion of the “triple bottom line” is that community solutions should be assessed based on how well they work for the long-term benefit of all three community attributes: society, economy and environment.

This publication is intended for individuals and organizations in the Sierra working to advance sustainability. More and more, the connection is being made from specialized efforts to a larger community-wide sustainability movement. This case studies publication looks at real world examples of these efforts and their successes and challenges. It is our hope that this publication sparks new discussion and helps local leaders in the Sierra learn from the experiences of others. This Transition Town model has been applied in over seventy communities in the U.S. In this publication, we highlight APPLE’s grassroots-led sustainability movement in the Sierra and North Hampton’s local government that established a sustainability vision.

USEFUL DEFINITIONS

Sustainability: Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, fulfilling the social, economic, ecological and other requirements of present and future generations.

Transition Town: (also known as transition network or transition movement) is a grassroots network of communities that are working to build resilience in response to peak oil, climate destruction, and economic instability.

Peak Oil: Defined as the point in time when the maximum rate of global petroleum extraction is reached.

PEAK OIL: A GLOBAL CHALLENGE FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The sustainability initiatives and frameworks presented in this publication share some common objectives in response to global problems affecting them locally, including *peak oil*. Peak oil is a concept that explains fossil fuel depletion and the domino effect that occurs when the resource that the world depends on most becomes severely limited. Peak oil is not about running out of oil. It's about running out of *cheap* oil. As safe and cost-effective oil deposits are extracted, companies are now drilling for smaller deposits in more sensitive areas, under more dangerous conditions, and with increased environmental impacts and hazards. For example, offshore deep water drilling is costly and dangerous, yet it remains a growing oil extraction technique to meet global demand. In April 2010, the Deepwater Horizon rig exploded in the Gulf of Mexico when it struck a deposit of methane gas a mile below the surface. The incident resulted in the largest marine oil spill in history and a six-month moratorium on offshore drilling by the U.S. Department of the Interior in order to assess the risks and hazards associated with the practice.

Oil extraction is becoming more challenging, demand is increasing, and gas, goods and services are becoming more expensive. The United States depends on imported fossil fuels for virtually everything, including transportation, food, manufacturing, and energy. When the U.S. hit its peak oil production in 1972, the rate of depletion was still high over the ensuing decades, due to a significant wave of technological innovations. Though some oil experts and geologists suggest that global peak oil occurred between 2006 and 2012, others believe the peak has long passed. As the resource becomes increasingly limited, it will continue to impact our lifestyles, economy and national security. Realizing this, many communities in the U.S. and abroad have begun the process of transitioning away from a dependence on foreign oil to become more resilient, self-reliant and energy independent in the face of peak oil.

CURRENT CHALLENGES FACING SIERRA NEVADA COMMUNITIES

Climate Change impacts could be catastrophic

The U.S. contributes 20% of the world's GHG emissions, with rural communities having higher per capita GHG emissions than urban areas. Climate change is decreasing our snowpack, increasing wildfire, threatening wildlife, and challenging our water quality and supply systems. This affects local Sierra economies and quality of life.

Pollution and strain from 150 years of human development

Almost all Sierra watersheds, lands and wildlife have significant problems from current activities and legacy impacts such as: poorly managed logging, mining and development in fragile ecosystems.

Increased population affects our rural character and way of life

The population in the Sierra is expected to triple by 2050. A vast majority of currently planned development for this growing population is unsustainable and will strain and pollute our water quality and water supply systems, decrease ranch and agricultural lands, threaten wildlife populations and increase the threat of wildfire.

Economic downturn has hit Sierra residents hard

Population growth outpaces job creation. The per capita income gap between Sierra and urban California residents continues to widen while unemployment remains higher in our counties than the rest of the state.

Sierra communities could be especially impacted by peak oil because they are rural and spread-out. Sierra residents tend to drive more than their urban neighbors, gas is generally more expensive and most food and other goods have to be trucked up to the mountains. Also, Sierra communities thrive largely on tourists to support their businesses – businesses that rely on people driving to the Sierra, driving around the Sierra, and participating in tourist activities like boating or snowmobiling that require the use of fossil fuels.

CASE STUDY 1

TRANSITION TOWNS

A global network of communities working together to develop a tried and true sustainability framework.

“Our central survival task for the decades ahead, as individuals and as a species, must be to make a transition away from the use of fossil fuels – and to do this as peacefully, equitably, and intelligently as possible”. - Richard Heinberg, The Post-Carbon Institute

This case study examines the Transition Model and Transition Towns Network with specific attention to how Sierra towns can benefit from this global phenomenon and which aspects of the model could be challenging. The Transition Model is relatively new, but it’s sweeping across the globe, in large part due to its inherent flexibility and logic-based approach, which bluntly states, “If it doesn’t work, don’t do it!”

TRANSITION TOWNS ARE GOING GLOBAL

What do Transition Towns look like? In Idaho, there is a free self-guided Green Home Tour and year-round skill-building workshops to help people learn about green building. In Washington, a centuries-old form of schooling resurfaced to re-skill its youth for a more sustainable life. In the desert region of Joshua Tree, citizens are exploring how to grow food locally by hosting a free introductory class to Permaculture. These community events are all being organized by local Transition Town groups, each of which is connected to the ever-expanding Transition Town global network of self-organized local sustainability movements. Currently, there are almost 400 official Transition initiatives worldwide, 100 in the U.S. and thousands just beginning their journey.

Whether they are dubbed Transition Cities, Universities or Islands, communities all over the world are embarking on the journey toward a lower-energy future through adoption of the *Transition Model* – a framework for achieving local sustainability.

The mission of Transition Towns is simple: “to inspire, encourage, connect, support and train communities as they adopt and adapt the transition model on their journey to urgently rebuild resilience and drastically reduce CO2 emissions.”

The Transition approach is unique from other sustainability models. The Transition Town approach formalizes a process for community sustainability initiatives that can be applied *globally*. It’s a locally-grown response to global threats teaching that small-scale action can create big change. It’s also a non-

political movement with a positive outlook; it's about creating change from a proactive instead of a reactive stance. Most importantly, it's a starting point that gets people talking. From this, self-organized community groups spawn and are connected to the network of other Transition efforts that sprawl across the globe. The Transition Model itself is designed to be adaptable to different communities and aims to help local community leaders clear the initial hurdles to create a more sustainable future in the face of global challenges.

The Transition Model breeds collective local action that aims for global change. Its versatility and applicability have created a living model that is constantly evolving, diversifying and building upon itself. A Transition initiative relies on motivated community members to start, shape and sustain it. This is one of the initiative's strong points – it is a homegrown, citizen-led planning effort that promotes collaboration and recognizes the particular needs of the community, while learning from past strategies.

OVERVIEW OF TRANSITION TOWNS

Why Transition?

The concept was first created by Rob Hopkins and Naresh Giangrande and later became more fully developed through a pilot project in Totnes, England, in 2005. From this, several citizen-led groups sprouted into a growing network with shared concerns about the current converging peak oil, climate and economic crises. Peak oil expert and author, Richard Heinberg, “has concluded that no amount of energy efficiency, clean energy, nuclear power and unconventional fossil fuel can replace oil at the prices that we're used to paying.” (1) If everyone switched to alternative energy sources tomorrow, neither the amount of time nor money exists for these sources to reliably provide the amount of energy needed to sustain current levels of economic activity. Transition Towns recognize that communities will feel the shock of a rapidly shifting global system; proponents of the movement argue transitioning will help curb those shocks, and communities will become stronger and more resilient.

These impending crises can be overwhelming and discouraging; however, the Transition Town Model inspires an optimistic response that not only meets these challenges head-on, but also helps towns become more connected, vibrant, independent, and economically prosperous. As the Executive Director of Transition US, Carolyne Stayton states, “Instead of a contagion of fear it is a contagion of possibility.”

THE TRANSITION MODEL AND GLOBAL NETWORK

The transition begins when a small group of motivated individuals comes together to address the shared concern of peak oil, climate change and the economic crises. This initial group asks themselves this big question:

"FOR ALL THOSE ASPECTS OF LIFE THAT OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN ITSELF AND THRIVE, HOW DO WE SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE RESILIENCE (IN RESPONSE TO PEAK OIL), DRASTICALLY REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS (IN RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE) AND GREATLY STRENGTHEN OUR LOCAL ECONOMY (IN RESPONSE TO ECONOMIC INSTABILITY)?"

To begin to answer this question, the Transition Model comes in to help. Its strength lies in guiding the group at the onset, building a strong foundation with committed individuals who recognize the key assumptions of the model: reductions in fossil fuel energy availability is inevitable; adaptation to a world with less oil is inevitable; it is better to plan for change now than be taken by surprise. However, the model's other key strength is that it engenders a fluid, collaborative process; groups can adopt the model as it fits into their vision and create solutions that are catered to their communities.

Organizations and governments are working independently and collectively to address peak oil and climate change. Similarly, Transition Initiatives are striving to develop and implement solutions that combat peak oil and climate change; however, they use case-by-case solutions rather than prescriptive approaches that are often seen as a band-aid solution. There is room for all groups to work together and complement each other's efforts. Joining the Transition Initiatives network can be broken down into two steps: first, form the initiating group, then become an official initiative.

The Transition Model guides groups at the onset, but, as Transition US heavily emphasizes, it is not entirely prescriptive. The Model is based on people's real-world experiences and practices of tackling carbon emissions. Groups that have successfully transitioned or are in the process of transitioning, act as models for prospective transition towns. New transition groups can refer to and study successful groups in order to learn what might work for their initiative. This is valuable because time and energy is saved and groups do not need to re-invent the wheel. They can simply refer to other groups' journeys and adjust their strategy accordingly. The official Transition Model is not a concrete final product but rather a continually refined and "living" model which can be used as a tool by all types of communities.

The Transition Model provides a flexible framework comprised of the following:

- 1) *Guiding Principles*
- 2) *Guidelines*
- 3) *"12 Ingredients"*
- 4) *"7 Buts"*
- 5) *Scales*
- 6) *Transition as a Pattern*

An especially notable section of the framework is the "12 Ingredients" that initiating groups can follow in any order as they strive for sustainability. Eventually, the model leads groups to pursue the creation of a 20 year **Energy Descent Action Plan (EDAP)**, which designates paths away from oil dependence and sets a vision for a powered-down re-localized future. To reiterate, this is a framework, which serves to inform, caution, guide, and most importantly - inspire.

12 INGREDIENTS TO ENERGY INDEPENDENCE & AN EDAP

The 12 "Ingredients" are based on successful Transition Initiatives and referred to as ingredients because they do not need to be used in a specific order but have proven useful for overall success.

1.) **Gather**

Create a steering group that will guide further development.

2.) **Spread the Word**

Get people together and spread the word about solutions and potential options.

3.) Lay the Foundation

Emphasize that the Initiative strives to be a catalyst for community discussion and brainstorming of solutions.

4.) The Great Unleashing Event

Unveil the project to the entire community in a way that reaches as many people as possible and excites them.

5.) Team Up

Form working groups that focus on elements of community sustainability.

6.) Open Space Discussion

Create a space and time for organized conversation. People will have a lot to say and lots of questions.

7.) Realistic Visioning

It's important to make sure the group's ideas are practical and achievable.

8.) The Great Re-skilling

Moving toward a lower-energy future requires a "re-skilling" of individuals to prepare for the effects of peak oil and climate change.

9.) Involve Local Government

Long-term progress cannot be made without cultivating a positive relationship with local government.

10.) Bring in Great Aunt Patty and Grandpa George

Utilize the knowledge and insight of elders who lived in less oil-dependent times.

11.) Go with the Flow

Transitioning takes a solid amount of community ingenuity and creativity. Be open to changes and keep your focus on the key goal (building community resilience and reducing emissions).

12.) Ready for the Energy Descent Action Plan?

The EDAP will set out your community's vision for a lower-energy localized and sustainable future. It will map out a series of steps of how the community will steer itself away from oil-dependency and toward that future. It will attempt to address not just energy, but also a wide range of areas that affect the community's way of life.

The 12th ingredient doesn't mark an end to the transitioning process, rather the beginning of the initiative. Again, this list of ingredients is meant to be a general guide. What the Transition Network and the Model really want to convey is the importance of a strong beginning: making sure the group knows what they're in for, that they have the necessary grassroots support, and understand it adequately enough so that they can confidently secure future support.

It is highly emphasized that the core group has to ensure their community is truly ready for transitioning before applying to become official. A formal checklist is available to aid in this process, although arguments go back and forth about whether checklists or criteria should exist at all or if it should be more of a self-assessment process.

THE LEAPS & HURDLES OF TRANSITIONING

This model has had the unique ability to bring together a wide coalition of interests because it extends itself beyond any one issue while maintaining a grassroots base. This has allowed the Transition movement to expand as much as it has.ⁱ Many would argue the model's success has stemmed from its ability to allow initiatives to sprout from a grassroots base while utilizing the Transition Network's organizational capacity, existing foundation and harmonic branding.ⁱⁱ This open dialogue and sharing of information and resources fosters a symbiotic relationship that allows the Network to continually strengthen as more Initiatives join.

As you navigate through the Transition Network website, a "Cheerful Disclaimer" link is listed at the left that leads to an unusual but frank statement, "We truly don't know if this will work." This disclaimer is a reminder that the transition process is not a fine-tuned science and is subject to a myriad of confounding variables. The Transition Network recognizes the real doubts people may feel when entering the Transition Process. The Network provided a section in their Handbook which describes and addresses common hurdles or "excuses."

7 THRESHOLDS THAT TRANSITION TOWNS MUST OVERCOME

1) *We've got no funding.*

Issue: It's not cheap to rebuild the infrastructure of a town and funding is hard to come by, especially in the current economic state.

Possible Solutions: Money can get us places, but enthusiasm and community support can get us further. As mentioned before, it is the latter that are the supporting legs of an initiative.

Example: The Transition Town of Totnes, England, did not have funding when they started in 2005; however, through self-funded efforts such as film screenings, seminars and other events they were able to bring in enough funding to subsidize their events and support their Transition.

2) *They won't let us.*

Issue: The fear that the movement will be shut down or ruthlessly attacked by opponents causing the transition process to come to a halt.

Possible Solutions: Transition Initiatives operate "below the radar" and don't single out any one group or core issue.

Example: Many groups have gotten support from bigger powerful entities that believe in their work and are happy to support the process. The City of Reno, NV provided major funding to Transition Reno to put on *Visions of Future Reno: Energy in Transition Artown Exhibit* that was part of their summer long artown festival featuring more than 400 events and 100 citywide cultural organizations and businesses.

3) *There are already green groups in this town, and we don't want to step on their toes.*

Issue: With so many environmental groups already in existence, it can be challenging to rationalize starting another.

Possible Solution: Make it clear that forming an initiative is about creating a common goal that will promote collaboration and support all groups involved, and not superseding or duplicating their work. Many groups will welcome the new energy and ideas an initiative brings to the table – expect them to become crucial allies.

Example: Transition leaders from the rural Northwest United States and neighboring Canadian provinces came together in September 2010 for the very first Transition Cascadia Regional Summit. The regional event was focused on discussions about collaborating with other groups on multiple levels. The summit demonstrated how regional cooperation could draw in numerous added resources and a wealth of knowledge.

4) *No one in this town cares about the environment anyway.*

Issue: Environmental activism isn't a key issue supported by the community.

Possible solutions: One of the successes of the Transition Model is how it created a “brand” that appeals to a wide audience while maintaining its community-led, grassroots support. The local food, crafts, history and cultural elements of Initiatives attract an unexpected crowd of supporters; the key is to go to them first.

Example: Transition Colorado hosted a county-wide EAT LOCAL! Week attracting local growers, top chefs and just the plain hungry. Citizens had the chance to learn about solar ovens, food preserving, saving seeds for winter and were invited to learn about their local food sources by experiencing fresh, delicious foods as a community. Who can really be against that?

5) *It's too late to do anything.*

Issue: The damage is done and our efforts cannot turn back the clock.

Possible Solutions: The Transition Network tells us this: *If we wait for the governments, it'll be too little, too late. If we act as individuals, it'll be too little. But if we act as communities, it might just be enough, just in time.*

Example: Whether it is a Seed Library in Richmond, California, an informational film-series in Staunton Augusta, Virginia, or meeting with a state representative as Transition Ann Arbor did, taking the reins and doing *something* with a positive, collaborative attitude can bloom into a movement that is powerful and magnetic.

6) *I don't have the right qualifications.*

Issue: Many community members do not have adequate training to redevelop an entire city. People would need an expert in every town to create an outline.

Possible Solutions: The only “qualifications” members of an initiating group need is to care about where they live and believe that change needs to occur for the good of the community. Gathering a number of diverse individuals with varying backgrounds is ideal later on in the process, but when starting an initiative, having a good attitude, an ability to work well with others and knowing the community are the only essential components to the start-up process.

Example: Transition Berea in Kentucky released their second “Re-Skilling Berea 2010 Calendar,” which involved resurrecting the knowledge and skills of past generations to educate present ones.

“As innovation becomes more central to the way we make our livings and how we tackle pressing challenges we face – from global warming to health pandemics – our well-being will depend more and more on what we share with others and create together.”

7) *I don't have the energy for doing this!*

Issue: People have jobs and families. Rebuilding a community requires a huge amount of time and effort, which few people have to spare.

- Charles Leadbeater, *We-Think*.

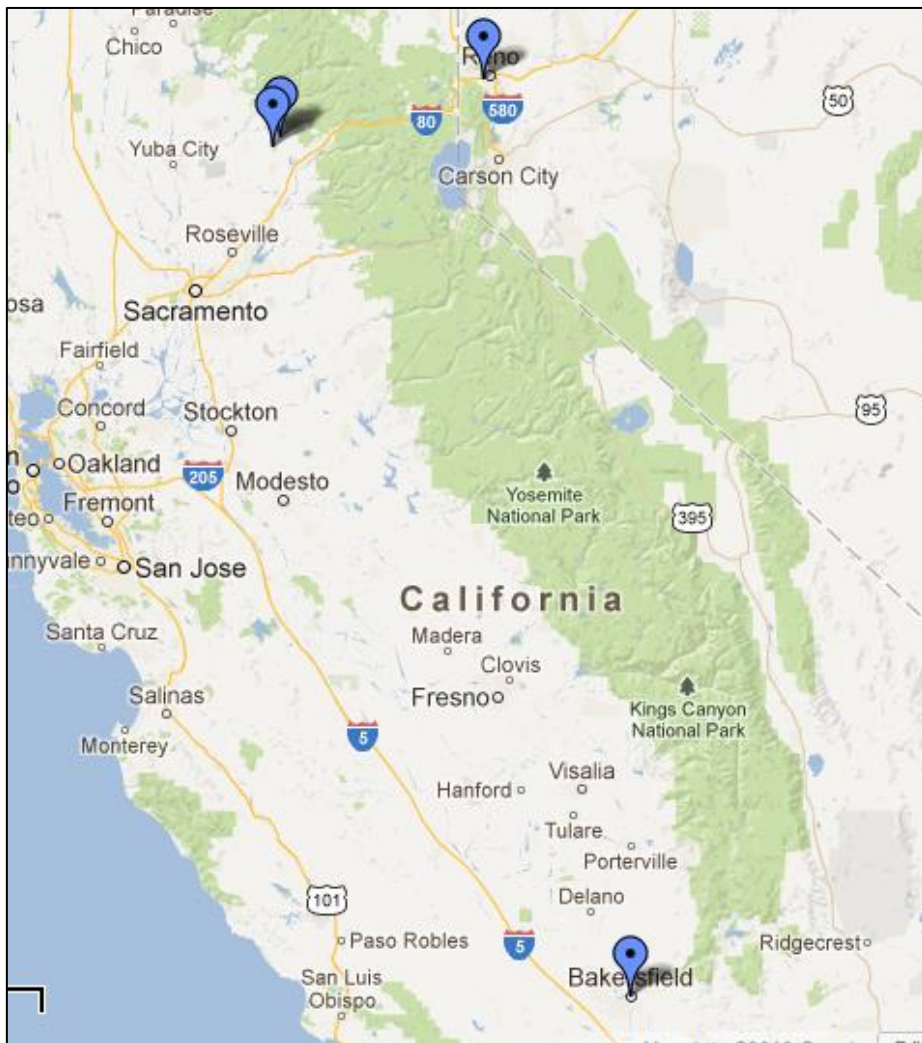
Possible Solutions: There's no reason for solely taking on the burden of combating such heavy global and national issues. Transition relies most heavily on the support garnered throughout the process, which helps it continue to gain momentum. It can be hard, thankless, time-consuming work trying to go from a “do-nothing” state to “let's start something” attitude, but during this process an energy that draws in the right people at the right time is cultivated.

Example: The rural areas of Jefferson County, Wisconsin, and Ellsworth, Maine, have endured the added challenge of being situated in large, physically disconnected rural areas that make it difficult to assemble a collective of voices. Nonetheless, co-founder Beth Gehred of *SustainJefferson* decided she could pull together representatives from all over her county to create a regional collaborative group. Organizer Brenda Cartwright of *Hancock County Towns in Transition* took the approach of networking with preexisting sustainability groups with whom she could form coalitions.

THERE WILL BE RESISTENCE TO TRANSITION

The number of resources available and the movement's expansion across the globe is impressive. With the huge number of initiatives starting up, the process seems like it should be getting easier. But the Transition Network reminds those transitioning that it is very important to provide psychological and spiritual support to community members. Change, even the good kind, can be overwhelming and difficult to adjust to; tackling peak oil, climate change and economic downturn is no small feat. Being sure to support each other is not just essential for the development of the transitioning process but is central to sustaining a lasting community resilience. This heart and soul component is what makes the Transition Model stand out.

For many communities in the beginning, support is not always present in the beginning. Many may feel they don't have a sense of established community. The initiating group needs a certain amount of creative genius, determination and pure gusto not just for crafting their transition plans and aspirations, but for the wider goal of restoring and strengthening the feeling of community. Having events like shared meals or a community gardening day creates an inclusive, positive atmosphere that invites attendance of an array of community groups, businesses and government and can lead to helpful discussion. Because the Transition Movement is working toward the goals of a more fulfilling, socially-connected life, it is generally not a controversial idea. Michael Brownlee, founder of Transition Boulder County, explains that it is not about trying to convert people, but just involving them in an organic process that avoids a controlling atmosphere and instead mimicks a more natural system of self-organization (Brownlee 2009).



This map highlights the transition towns/initiatives located within and near the Sierra Nevada Region. From top left to bottom right: Grass Valley Initiative, Nevada City, Reno, and Bakersfield.

CONCLUSION

Continuing the Journey to Relocalized, Powered-down and Resilient Communities

The Transition Initiative is a grassroots approach at its core with a mainstream appeal that is constantly undergoing a progressive metamorphosis. The community-led nature of the Transition Initiative is simple yet potently powerful in practice, because it borrows from sustainable communities that thrive economically equitably and happily in challenging times.

A challenge as profound as this one will test each individual's limits, summon his or her inner-most creative genius, and breed a whole new level of collaboration and indefatigability. Worldwide, initiatives continue to propagate and the potential for more in the U.S. continues to rise as cities, towns and rural communities navigate through the energy transition. Descending the energy hill to fend off climate change and peak oil is no small task, but it is not an impossible one.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Transition Initiatives Primer: becoming a Transition Town, City, and Community. Transition United States.
<http://transitionus.org/sites/default/files/US%20Transition%20Initiatives%20Primer.pdf>
- The Transition Handbook: <http://transitionus.org/transition-handbook>
- "The Transition Network Ltd: Who We Are And What We Do" by Rob Hopkins and Peter Lipmann. <http://transitionus.org/sites/default/files/TransitionNetwork-WhoWeAreWhatWeDo.pdf>



CASE STUDY 2

NEVADA CITY, CALIFORNIA

How grassroots organizing can pave the way to local sustainability

America runs on fossil fuels, but what happens when that resource becomes depleted and we're running on fumes? The extraction, transportation and burning of fossil fuels contributes greatly to global climate change, war and catastrophic disasters as seen with the most recent BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. Fossil fuels are not sustainable, and many communities are finding that taking steps to kick the oil addiction can actually help our local economies, increase our rural quality of life and improve our resilience when disasters strike across the globe.

The story of the Alliance for a Post-Petroleum Local Economy (APPLE) in Nevada City is an example of one such community and its journey towards oil independence. APPLE's perseverance, dedication, struggle, and resilience is an inspiring model. After initially writing this case study, APPLE was forced to close due to funding constraints; however, today they are back up and running remotely, contributing to the transition movement in Nevada City.

At a town hall meeting in Nevada City in May 2005, talk of dwindling fossil fuels and possible solutions began to circulate. The discussion continued in the halls and at coffee shops and finally sparked an organized community sustainability movement-- a non-profit called the Alliance for a Post-Petroleum Local Economy (APPLE). In 2009, the APPLE Center for Sustainable Living opened its doors as a meeting place, education center, and marketplace for local goods and services. Community volunteers helped retrofit the building itself to become a living example of sustainable living. Like many non-profit organizations, APPLE has had its challenges, but today, the Nevada City movement continues with innovative projects through strong partnership with the local government. It all began with a few passionate and dedicated individuals who took a critical look at how the issue of peak oil would affect their town and decided they wanted to actively seek solutions.



Mali Dyck (left), Former Executive Director of the Alliance for a Post-Petroleum Economy (APPLE) at the APPLE Center for Sustainable Living in Nevada City, California.

PEAK OIL OVER POT LUCK DINNERS: THE BEGINNINGS OF THE NEVADA CITY SUSTAINABILITY MOVEMENT

In 2005, citizens in Nevada City began to meet in community forums organized by local government. These forums gave citizens the opportunity to have their voices heard and to speak directly with local policy makers. At these forums, citizens could present issues for open discussion. Then, the assembly would prioritize the issues for further discussion and create volunteer focus groups to work on those issues. Essentially, the local government was responding to public interest on community issues and facilitated *ad hoc* citizen working groups.

One of the first topics to be raised was peak oil by local citizen Reinette Senum. Peak oil is defined as the point in time when the maximum rate of global petroleum extraction is reached, and after this point, the availability of the resource goes into terminal decline. Eventually, this can result in a catastrophic global energy crisis. Preparing Nevada City for a world with limited or no oil resources became the subject for one focus group and questions such as, “When peak oil happens, what are we going to do as a community?” or, “What can we do now to prepare for peak oil?” From the focus group and these types of questions, the Alliance for a Post-Petroleum Local Economy (APPLE) was formed to continue visioning and planning with the following mission: “To work to reduce dependency on fossil fuels, and to promote a more self-reliant local economy in Nevada County, California.”



Reinette Senum, previous mayor of Nevada City and co-founder of APPLE

In the beginning, APPLE volunteers held potluck dinners to casually discuss the implications of peak oil and what the community could do to decrease their dependency on foreign energy. Members agreed that these discussions were necessary and inspiring, but action was limited. One of the founding members of APPLE, Tom Grundy, recalls, “During the first five years of APPLE, there was a garage shop or think tank-type of mentality. We would only occasionally get things done.” Over time, they realized that reactionary measures to the threat of peak oil could also be initiatives to strengthen the local economy and improve quality of life. For example, neighborhood development that was not dependent on cars could lead to a more pedestrian-friendly neighborhood. This change would then result in improved quality of life for community members and visitors on multiple levels.

Increasingly, APPLE became a group dedicated to bringing people together to work on overlapping issues and projects. APPLE recognized that there were a growing number of groups and efforts, yet no physical location to share these opportunities or ideas. There was a need for a physical hub where the discussion of peak oil and other sustainability issues could continue in an open forum. “We believ[ed] that doing business and communicating face to face allow[ed] discussions and ideas to come alive.”

The goal of APPLE’s project, the Center for Sustainable Living, was to have a physical hub to facilitate Western Nevada County’s transition to a sustainable community. They wanted the Center to serve the

general public as a community gathering place for “greening” their lives. The Center would be a place where visitors and locals could connect to businesses and organizations that provide knowledge and tools for living sustainably.

As the vision for sustainability in their community was evolving, so was the political structure of the community. In 2008, Reinette Senum, one of the local citizens who sparked the creation of APPLE, was elected Mayor of Nevada City and served one term.

SUSTAINABILITY PROJECTS BY THE ALLIANCE FOR A POST-PETROLEUM LOCAL ECONOMY (APPLE)

Community Gardens

Gardens used by local citizens to grow food.

The Clean Power Co-operative of Nevada County

This project works with other agencies in the county to encourage energy conservation and small-scale renewable energy projects. Regular outreach events cover a full spectrum of energy related topics from bio fuels to wind farms and micro-hydro projects.

Peak Moment Television

An online television series featuring people and organizations working to create resilient communities for a more sustainable, lower-energy future. Programs range from permaculture farms to electric bikes, ecovillages to car-sharing and emergency preparedness. As of May 2010, over 170 half-hour programs became available online at <http://www.peakmoment.tv/conversations>

Power Up-NC

A blog that provides the forum to discuss a new vision of the future that does not include oil dependency.

Power Palooza Clean Energy Extravaganza

The goal of this event is to support Nevada City’s endeavor to reduce its carbon footprint and implement local solutions to rising energy and fuel costs and global warming.

THE APPLE CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING

The founders of APPLE had a vision for a sustainability center in their town, but no location and no funding. After some searching, they found a building from the early 1900’s in the center of town from the early 1900’s that was used by the forest service as a dispatch and storage center. It needed a lot of work, but because the location was so ideal, APPLE agreed that it was perfect for their center.

Despite having no financial backing, the team pooled their resources and submitted a grant proposal to secure partial funding for the project. The Private Industry Council gave an initial award of \$2,000 to APPLE to build the center. This was barely seed money compared to the scope of their vision, but it

was a start. They knew they did not have the resources to get the project finished, but decided to start anyway and entered into a lease agreement on the forest service building.

The first step they took was to get an energy audit for the building. “If the APPLE Center was going to be a hub for green living and sustainable energy use, we would have to lead by example and make sure it was energy efficient,” said Mali Dyck, Executive Director of APPLE. The building was discovered to be terribly inefficient. Poor insulation, duct work, windows and other building performance issues caused the building to leak warm air on cold days and cool air on hot days. In order to fix this problem, they had to retrofit the entire building using energy efficient building practices.

To help fund the retrofit process, APPLE hosted hands-on workshops on green building. “A big part of APPLE’s vision was to help educate, so why not start now,” reflected Grundy. They put on an insulation installation workshop where people paid a suggested donation to take a class on how to better insulate their homes. When it was time to install the grey water system (a system that takes wastewater generated from domestic activities such as laundry, dishwashing, and bathing and recycles it for safe on-site uses such as landscape irrigation) they held another workshop. The cost of the class paid for the contractor and the resources, and class participants helped with construction. “It really caught on. People who would normally stay away from doing home repair themselves felt comfortable attending the classes because of the relaxed learning environment,” Mali Dyck explained. The workshops also helped raise support for the project and appreciation for how APPLE would serve the community.

By the time the building was finished, APPLE had spent a total of \$5,000 on a project that would normally have cost \$80,000! On September 20th, 2009, the APPLE Center for Sustainable Living had its grand opening.

This incredible feat was made possible because of the hard work of dedicated volunteers, clever fundraising strategies, and strong community support for APPLE. Unfortunately, funding once again became a challenge and APPLE was forced to close its doors.

THE APPLE CENTER: A HUB FOR SUSTAINABILITY INFORMATION & ACTION

“The Center [was] a fixture in town. As envisioned, it acted as a hub for sustainability. People enter[ed] the center with questions on how to become more energy efficient, how to grow their own vegetables, raise chickens, or simply to chat with other like-minded people,” said one Nevada City citizen.



Mali installs an air and moisture barrier before adding insulation during the green building retrofit for APPLE Center for Sustainable Living.

“Some visitors entered the Center not knowing what they are walking into and ended up walking away with a ton of new knowledge and a new perspective,” remarks Mali Dyck, Executive Director of APPLE. What started off as an effort to help a community reduce its dependence on foreign oil and other fossil fuels turned into a hub for all things sustainable, including gardening, home energy efficiency, best management practices for storm water, alternative medicine, waste management and more. In addition, the Center sponsored events such as farmers markets, movie nights, pot luck dinners and educational workshops.

Even though APPLE no longer has a physical hub, they are still “working in the areas of energy, transportation, food and water, preparedness, and the economy. APPLE is building alliances with local organizations, government, and businesses to share information and engage other groups in creating their own local sustainable solutions,” said Senum. “We’ve assembled workgroups, public outreach events and created a shift in community awareness that was beyond my solitary imagination. These solutions were born out of a community effort that was aware that, collectively, we could bring forth the necessary solutions.”

Today, the cost-effectiveness of the internet makes it a great tool for grassroots campaigns; the internet enables APPLE to exist and fill an important role in the community.



Inside APPLE Center for Sustainability

THE CORE OF APPLE’S SUCCESS

Nevada City, California is home to many forward-thinking people who care about the future of their community. Still, developing the vision of APPLE took time and resources.

It began with a question. “What are we going to do when oil and natural gas become too expensive or scarce for us to acquire?” The discussion sparked at that Town Hall meeting was developed by a group of citizens who wanted to develop solutions. The formation of APPLE was a long, careful process that was collaborative and inclusive. “Finding ways to become more sustainable starts with people and discussion. If you want to make an impact, start by finding people or groups with common interests and initiating an open conversation. Just the act of initiating these conversations has power. APPLE got its start in the same way,” remarked Tom Grundy. Turning talk into action was a big undertaking for these citizens. It was after a careful visioning and strategy process that APPLE formalized its mission and volunteers began working with local government and on-the-ground projects.

The story of the APPLE Center for Sustainability also has its lessons. To complete an \$80,000 remodel with only \$5,000, APPLE initiated a broad outreach effort to recruit volunteers and attain resources. APPLE staff used creative tactics to create a buzz about the Center, gather support, and keep the project moving forward. After positive and efficient outreach, the community understood this would be a center

“for the community, *by* the community.” The result was a snowball effect of volunteer hours and in-kind donations. Also, by allowing their vision to expand from peak oil to general sustainability, APPLE was able to reach a broader audience and gain more support. From the beginning, the founders of APPLE stressed the importance of inclusiveness in building a community organization. Sustainability movements can bring people with different motivations to the same table, which can build stronger local initiatives. APPLE closing its doors shows that there are setbacks to the ideals of transition towns. However, it also shows that once the seed is planted, the idea and movement continue to grow. As quoted from APPLE’s main site, “APPLE will continue to offer opportunities to gather, discuss, read and share information about sustainable lifestyles and sustainable communities...”

Still, the APPLE Center is only one aspect of the sustainability movement in Nevada City. Most recently, an Energy Solutions Task Force was created to investigate ways to make Nevada City a highly energy efficient community. While in office, Mayor Reinette Senum organized a “Green Team” to develop a sustainability plan for the city. The goal of the team is to create a comprehensive long term plan that will create a more sustainable future for future generations. The plan is intended to be bipartisan and all-inclusive. For more on the process of community visioning and planning at the local government level, read the next case study about the town of Northampton, Massachusetts.

APPLE is a movement that started from an idea and a discussion about securing a brighter future for the community. The seed sprouted into a small group of people with big ideas for making their small town better, more secure and independent. Knowing they couldn't do this on their own, the founders of the Alliance for a Post-Petroleum Local Economy in Nevada City got organized and took action with quick-start projects such as Power Up-NC and Peak Moment Television. Community members realized that APPLE was serious, and support for the group mounted. Though they were unable to maintain their physical presence, APPLE uses technology to continue their work. In the end, they are even more sustainable now than they were in a retrofitted building. APPLE stands as a strong example of a community coming together to create a movement for change that endured economic hardship and adapted in order to survive.

Margaret Mead said it best, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

CASE STUDY 3

NORTHAMPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Visioning & Planning for Sustainability on the Local Government Level

Many rural communities in the United States are struggling with similar environmental issues including development and land use, natural resource and habitat protection, water quality, forest health and more recently, climate change adaptation and mitigation. This case study focuses on the City of Northampton, a small community of 30,000 nestled in rural Western Massachusetts along the Connecticut River. Northampton shares similar environmental pressures as Sierra towns- most notably, development pressures and a record of poor land-use planning. From 1950 to 1990, the population of Massachusetts grew by 28%, while the amount of developed land grew by 188%. Rural communities, like Northampton, experienced the brunt of this suburban sprawl in areas rich with wildlife, wilderness, and working farmlands.

Citizens and leaders in Northampton noticed that development patterns were not only disrupting the environment but also the community's quality of life. The town's walk-able, mixed-use downtown configuration and easy access to wilderness areas were threatened. As a result, Mayor Clare Higgins and citizen volunteers began a smart growth planning effort in anticipation of the upcoming general plan update. They recognized that the plan update offered an opportunity to engage the public in a discussion about the community's future. Despite the challenges of an all-encompassing community planning process, Mayor Higgins initiated Sustainable Northampton, which resulted in a city Sustainability Plan with clear goals and guidelines to steer future policy-making and funding for capital projects. Over the course of two years, the community engaged in a visioning process, soliciting input from the public and developing a key set of Guiding Principles that were incorporated into the Sustainability Plan. The Sustainability Plan includes the vision, guiding principles, goals, strategies and metrics to measure success across a wide range of sustainability sectors, including transportation, energy, and waste/recycling. The Plan was formally adopted in December 2007 and projects inspired by the plan took root soon after.

Today, Northampton continues to be recognized as a model for good planning, strong community leadership and outstanding quality of life for residents. Awards include:

- "Top 25 Arts Destinations" by American Style Magazine, 2000 – 2009
- "Great Cities for the Simple Life," AARP magazine, July 2009
- "Great Places in America" Award from American Planning Association for Main Street, Fall 2007
- "Top 100 Best Places to Live", by CNN Money Magazine, 2005. Northampton ranked number 80 on the list

- “Best Places To Live – Big Small Towns” by Boston Magazine, April 2001
- “100 Best School Districts in the U.S.” by Offspring: The Magazine of Smart Parenting, September/October 2000

“HOW CAN WE IMPROVE OUR TOWN?” FROM A COMMON VISION TO A COMPREHENSIVE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The catalyst for Sustainable Northampton was the required revisions of an outdated, 30-year-old city plan. This, coupled with rapidly growing development pressures, gave Mayor Clare Higgins and a group of citizens the incentive to try to gain consensus and fight sprawl. Rather than staging a battle over the city plan, the group, along with a sustainable community planning consulting firm, amassed popular support for the kind of growth citizens *do* want to see. Supported growth initiatives included more mixed-use development and prioritizing renewable energy, public transportation, and local business.

The resulting Sustainability Plan was a way for different sectors of the city and local leadership to work together more efficiently. Additionally, an integrated Sustainability Plan was a way to address issues that overlap. For instance, land use planning is highly connected to water quality, wilderness area management, transportation planning and climate change. With a comprehensive Sustainability Plan, Northampton could establish Guiding Principles based on a community vision that did not isolate issue areas which affect each other.

Mayor Higgins and the community members recognized the enormity of their task, but they didn’t let it



deter them. Instead, they looked for help. To get started, the city secured a small planning grant from the American Institute of Architects (AIA). This financial support allowed the city to invite sustainable planning consultants to host a community forum with Northampton citizens. The topic of the forum was, “How can we improve our city?” The goal of the initial meeting was to get citizens involved, hear concerns from community members, affirm the role of public commentary, and begin developing a common vision for the community, by the community.

The forums generated a good buzz for the new effort, known commonly as Sustainable Northampton. One Northampton resident, Carolyn Misch, remarked, “It was great. Experts with an outside perspective came in

and basically showed us a mirror of where we stood as a community. After the reflection process, it was much easier to see where we wanted to be.” With good participation at the initial workshop, the City of Northampton decided to continue the process, despite limited funds.

In June of 2005, a steering committee was formed which consisted of representatives from city boards, city staff, residents and community groups. This became the core organizational and fund-raising group

for the whole Sustainable Northampton effort. In early 2006, the city held nine focus groups and neighborhood meetings to obtain public input in the following areas:

- Characteristics and community values that should guide Northampton
- Social, economic and/or physical changes that have most affected the community
- Areas of conflict among various goals and visions for a sustainable community
- Key areas of concern around sustainability
- Key actions, policies or infrastructure improvements needed to support a sustainable vision

After the focus group meetings, Sustainable Northampton held two “Did We Get It Right” workshops to ensure that input received during the workshops was adequately captured and to provide another chance to comment on the outcomes of the focus group meetings.

Preceding the community workshops, Sustainable Northampton moved to phase two which included the following steps:

- Synthesize all of the community input, data and previous plans into a comprehensive draft plan
- Add the Vision, Guiding Principles, and Measurements of Progress/Metrics
- Hold public workshops for presentation of the drafts to the community
- Prepare the final plan for adoption by the Planning Board and City Council

The research and development of the plan took over two years. Built off the backs of pre-existing community plans, Sustainable Northampton is largely based on public forums, focus groups and community surveys. The Plan is reviewed on an annual basis. Measureable guidelines are assessed and based on these assessments, resources are allocated each year. This allows for flexibility of the Plan as the community progresses and new challenges arise.

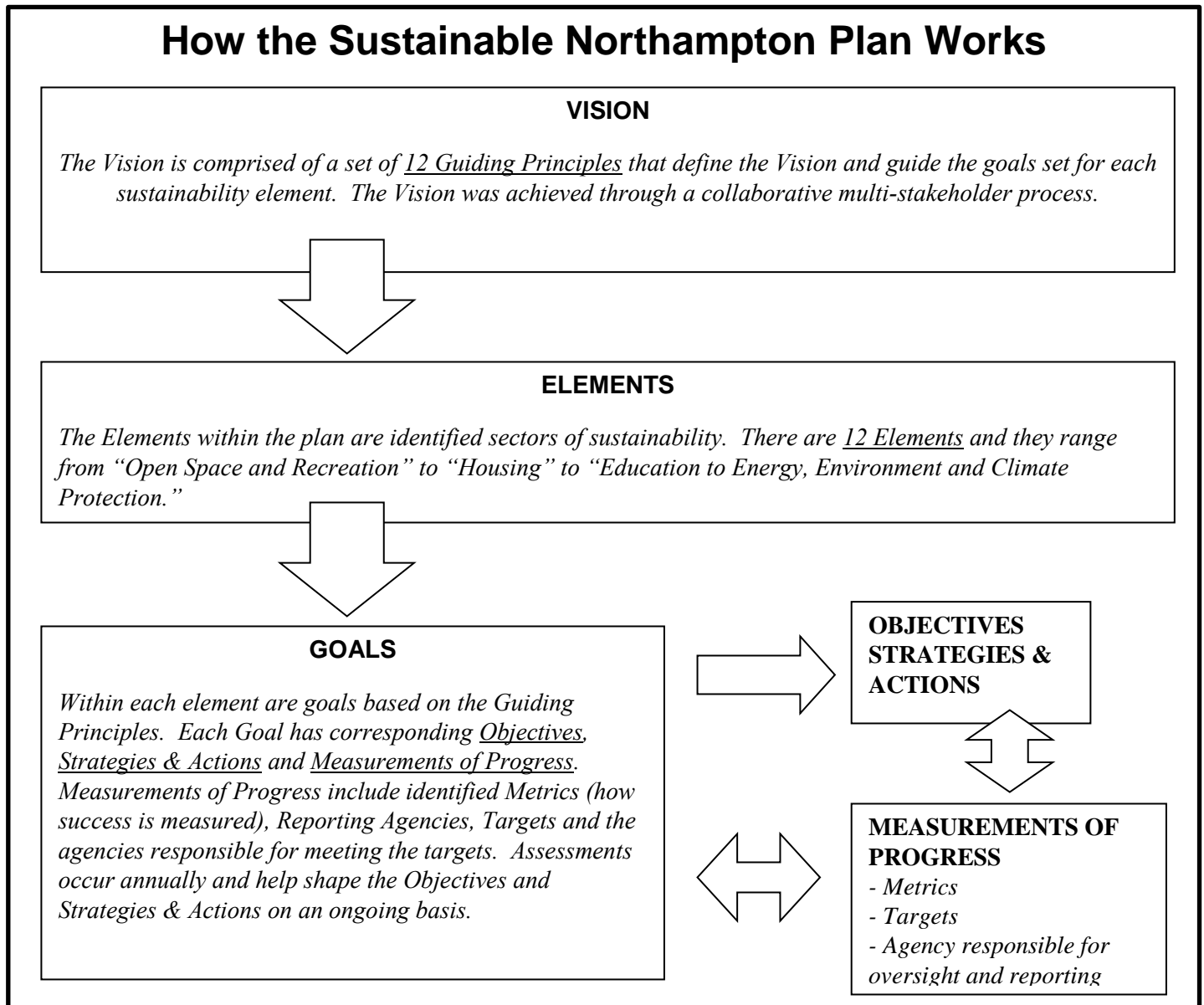
The Sustainable Northampton community vision is to “embrace leadership in the advancement of sustainable practices, encourage open community discussion and increase participation among local citizens to conserve, grow and celebrate local culture and quality of life.” In essence, this vision of an ideal community not only addresses issues such as land use and energy, but it also incorporates a vision of how the community ought to function, specifically highlighting the role of citizens as civic leaders and the changes they want to see in the community.

To that end, the Vision expresses that, “in crafting a vision that will impact the natural environment and quality of life at many levels, this plan is driven by concepts of social equity, economic and cultural vitality, and environmental security. Keeping these concepts alive will require a commitment by Northampton’s citizens.”

Leadership – locally and regionally – in the advancement of sustainable practices that manage land use for long-term benefits, reduce dependency on non-renewable fuels, reduce consumption of resources without offsetting benefits, and improve our impact on the environment.

Inclusiveness, tolerance and civic-mindedness by embracing diversity and encouraging full participation in community conversations. It is assumed that controversy and debate will only further the discussion and result in greater participation and ownership by the community.

Vibrancy as a city that supports the arts, non-profit organizations, higher education and businesses in an atmosphere that allows growth and prosperity while at the same time conserving our heritage, natural resources, and history.



To be effective, the leaders of *Sustainable Northampton* realized that the sustainability plan would need to be broad, yet targeted, in order to both encompass a vision and be a meaningful document that carried weight. For this reason, the plan incorporates specific goals for each sustainability element. Each goal has Objectives and Strategies & Actions to achieve the goal. Measurements of Progress are used to assess the effectiveness of the Strategies & Actions. Realizing that goals and objectives can change over time, the creators of the Sustainability Plan created it as a working document. Therefore, annual assessments using the Measurements of Progress can help shape the Goals and corresponding Strategies & Actions on an ongoing basis so that they remain aligned. Interestingly, the plan also identifies *Potential Conflicts* and *Potential Responses* that might arise with each on-the-ground strategy or action.

THE 12 GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE NORTHAMPTON

Guiding Principles were established through a community-wide effort and form the basis for all goals and actions that follow in the plan for each element.

- 1. Support a diverse and integrated community** where all residents have the opportunity to excel on a social, economic, and academic level and to lead healthy, independent and successful lives;
- 2. Act as a part of a broader region** through the resources connecting us beyond our municipal borders, such as watersheds, rivers, roads, economy, culture, or common goals;
- 3. Significantly improve energy efficiency** in city buildings and programs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and encourage conservation and use of alternative and renewable energy sources throughout the community;
- 4. Support a wide variety of housing types** that increase rental and homeownership units to create and preserve a range of affordability and choice in housing options;
- 5. Support artists and the arts, local culture**, history, and education at all levels as vital to a successful, well-balanced community;
- 6. Connect municipal capital improvements** directly to the goals of *Sustainable Northampton*;
- 7. Adopt land use patterns** that maintain a mix of urban and rural areas; concentrate development in neighborhood, village, and commercial centers supported by adequate infrastructure, including public transit; promote energy efficiency; and protect environmental, open space, and agricultural resources.
- 8. Recognize and foster the unique history**, character and function of each residential, commercial, mixed use, and open space neighborhood.
- 9. Recognize that a diverse and vibrant economy** is integral to a successful community and support business and job development that contribute to the community and the city's long-term sustainability;
- 10. Make the city increasingly more walkable**, bikeable, and transit oriented;
- 11. Improve citizens' lives** through continuous, high quality education; and,
- 12. Operate the city as a democratic enterprise** that is responsive and responsible to the fiscal, economic, social, and environmental interests of its citizens.

“ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY”

The Sustainability Plan applies the 12 Guiding Principles to a set of twelve elements of sustainability:

Land Use and Development
Environment, Energy and Climate Protection
Open Space and Recreation
Economic Development
Infrastructure and Capital Resources
Transportation

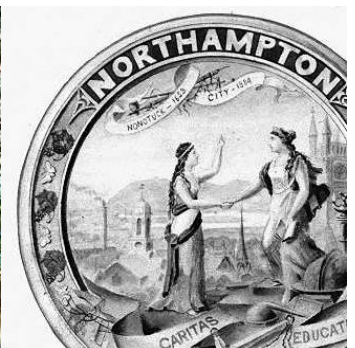
Arts and Culture
Heritage Resources
Housing
Municipal Governance and Financial Stability
Education
Social Equity

THE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN IN ACTION

It’s been four years since Sustainable Northampton was adopted, and the city has seen some great successes. According to Planning Director, Wayne Feiden, the largest success story of Sustainable Northampton thus far is the change it has created in the community dialogue. They still have enormous debates on public policy, but the vocabulary now includes competing arguments for sustainability. “I find the change in the conversation to be far more important than any concrete projects,” says Feiden. With that being said, they also have many concrete projects; however, it is hard to decipher what actions came out of the plan and what didn’t. The plan represented a solidifying of a strong sustainability focus and a greater engagement in the community, but it wasn’t an instant paradigm shift.

The city had been working on several projects before the adoption of the Sustainability Plan, but with its adoption, they were put into a new context. For instance, Northampton had been working on the creation of a multi-use trail network for eight years before the Plan. This trail network had originally been viewed as a set of isolated projects. After the Plan was adopted, the trail network gained public support and the network of rail trails and multi-use trails became viewed as an integrated part of the city’s sustainable transportation system. Thus far, the city has opened nine miles of new trails, which connect downtown Northampton to other villages and abutting communities.

With energy generation as the biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions out of all sectors with 80 percent of the total, Northampton quickly realized



that in order to reach their goals of being more sustainable, they would need to tackle this issue on a community-wide scale. They hired a new energy coordinator, signed a large energy services performance contract, adopted a green building building-code, and are now focused on private sector energy efficiency and conservation efforts. Aside from the city's efforts to address energy, they have also advanced efforts to amend zoning to create more appropriate urban density and development incentives in the urban core area.

Open space preservation has always been a large focus of the Northampton Planning Department. However, after the Plan's adoption, efforts are no longer just about preserving open space; efforts now focus on steering development to the appropriate locations.

A mere four years after the Plan's adoption, Northampton has not experienced many dramatic, tangible community changes yet. However, one year after the Plan's adoption, the recession hit and drew immediate attention to the local economy. Feiden says, "Sometimes this focus has been on invigorating the economy in local, sustainable ways, but other times there has been strong pressure for compromise for anything that will create jobs, whether the jobs are contributing to the greater goal of community sustainability or not." There is no denying that the recession has negatively affected most U.S. town economies; in troubled times, any jobs are considered good jobs. As a result of the recession, however, there has been a much stronger focus on sustainable transportation efforts that allow residents to save money on transportation, such as the Zip Car program or safer pedestrian walkways.

THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE NORTHAMPTON'S SUCCESS

A large-scale plan that seeks to shift the social, economic and environmental future of a community, like Sustainable Northampton, requires time and public support. While their greatest success with the Plan thus far has been changing the community conversation to one that is sustainability-focused, their greatest challenge has been opposition by urban neighborhoods which fight density efforts. By creating a centralized, walk-able downtown with mixed-use and multi-unit buildings, residents can be less dependent on automobiles, live in more efficient homes and have a higher quality of life. The idea of a higher-density community can require a shift in thinking by those who prioritize space and single-family neighborhoods. Like any big change within a community, it will require an evolution of consciousness among residents; opponents must understand how density efforts contribute to the greater goal of creating a sustainable community.

Northampton Planning Director, Wayne Feiden, has said that the key to creating and implementing the Sustainable Northampton Plan was the strong support they received from Mayor Clare Higgins as well as the involvement and passion of a wide constituency. Without both, they would have struggled to pass projects through the government and would have lacked the public support needed to embrace sustainable change. All the city's big efforts involve community members as well as government groups like the Planning Board, Energy Commission, and Parking and Transportation Commission.

Since the adoption and creation of Sustainable Northampton, the public has been heavily involved in discussions prior to any formal implementation processes, making the public debate on all things planning-related stronger than ever. "If anything, the community is pushing for changes faster than we

have resources to implement,” says Feiden. The discussion about density in the downtown neighborhoods is still the most divisive issue, but Feidan says that there is such overwhelming public support for sustainability efforts that the pushback they receive has been slight.

“The success of a sustainability plan depends on the partnership between the people who want to help and the local government. This is what will make the difference. People with vested interest making sure everyone’s niche is being well served,” says Andrea Cooper, Coastal Smart Growth Coordinator for the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management. The City of Northampton has been successful in the creation of their sustainability plan because of just this. The multi-stakeholder approach ensures that all issues are addressed within the sustainability plan and align with one another. The two-year long public process allowed for careful, long-term planning. Accountability that is built into the Plan ensures that goals will be met and monitored for thoroughness and consistency. The Plan also allows for flexibility as elements change or better solutions are found. The Plan was successful in large part because of the approach leaders took in establishing the framework. They did not ask: “What are the problems?” but rather, “How can our town be better?” It is with this attitude that the City was able to come together as citizens, organizations and agencies to create a robust sustainability plan that is a source of pride for the community and a beam of light for their future as a Sustainable Northampton.

CONCLUSIONS FROM SUSTAINABLE NORTHAMPTON

- They didn’t create a huge tangible transformation in the city, but they created a change in the conversation, which will lead to more sustained change on the ground in future years.
- The Plan was directed and created by the city’s residents, which encouraged more community buy-in for sustainability efforts within the city and increased the likelihood of the Plan’s success.
- The Plan was messaged in a way that emphasized the quality of life, rather than sustainability, making their constituency more apt to participate.

CONCLUSION

As each community is different, and so are the ways in which plans are made for a sustainable future. There is not one correct way to address sustainability—each circumstance requires a personal approach. By taking action now to face future challenges, communities take control of their future and become part of the global solution by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, creating robust local economies that generate jobs, increasing quality of life among residents and creating a sense of community that people want to protect. There are existing models for success that can serve as resources for communities striving to create change, a few of which are illustrated in this case studies publication. If you would like to share a concept, project or plan that you think would be an exemplary model for sustainability in the Sierra, please contact the Sierra Nevada Alliance so that we can share your ideas with others looking for successful examples. In the meantime, the Sierra Nevada Alliance will continue its commitment to foster and support local actions that help create resilient Sierra communities that can better face the major issues like climate change, peak oil and economic downturns.

Citations:

- (1) Heinberg, Richard and Jerry Mander. *Searching for a Miracle: 'Net Energy' Limits and the Fate of Industrial Society*. Post Carbon Institute and International Forum on Globalization. Sept 2009.

ⁱ Balls 2010

ⁱⁱ Balls, 2010