



The Partnership for the Green Dividend

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Taking up the Call: City Sustainable

A century ago, America was in urgent need of a comprehensive urban strategy. Industrialization and excessive population growth swelled the size of cities and forced harsh living conditions upon the urban poor. Noise, pollution, and trash were accepted as common elements of the urban landscape. Contributing to these problems was the complete absence of urban planning policies, building codes, and public health and safety standards. All of these problems made urban areas increasingly unlivable and prompted the creation of the City Beautiful Movement. This movement provided solutions to the aesthetic deficiencies of American cities as well as relieved many of the underlying social ills that afflicted so many of the era's urban dwellers.

Much like industrializing cities before the City Beautiful era, today's communities are in transition, not only due to the current economic and political climates, but also

because of our physical climate. Pollution, carbon emissions, and climate change are realities threatening communities around the world, and local economies unable to adapt to these challenges risk becoming obsolete.

Livability now represents an agent of change as defined by its popular usage: encompassing a range of tenets including economic prosperity, environmental sustainability, and resilience of a community as a whole, livability has become a standard towards which every city should strive. Partners for Livable Communities (PLC) is a national non-profit working to renew and restore livability to the communities in which we work and live. Over the next three years, PLC will embark on a national campaign to rebrand the concept of livability, preparing and enhancing communities through the lens of one of the most important issues of our time: sustainability. With funding from the Packard Foundation, PLC will define, assess, and improve the livability of communities through a comprehensive

and regional approach that uses place-based strategies and existing community assets for the development of a National Livability Analysis.

Sustainability encompasses not just environmental sustainability, but being prosperous and resilient and providing equitable opportunities for the whole community. Adjoining jurisdictions have realized they must come together for the benefit of the greater region as a whole; no one city or town can create a sustainable environment or economy without collaborating with surrounding areas. Thinking regionally involves a new set of players and visions, and creating a livable city requires a strong regional development plan that makes common sense.

The need for a comprehensive planning strategy has never been clearer. As Americans march towards an increasingly undefined economic future, new norms and values must be established to tackle the inequities in our society. The “clean economy” offers a path to recovery. Innovation, entrepreneurship, and new businesses are at the heart of economic rebuilding, and today they can be found in emerging green markets.

Economics of Sustainability: A Partnership for the Green Dividend – Joint Venture of PLC and Climate Prosperity

Founded in 2007 to bring together metro regions, businesses, investors, and markets, Climate Prosperity Project has provided countless communities with the means to take advantage of clean economy and green job market opportunities. Given their combined economic development and sustainability focus, PLC and Climate Prosperity have formed “The Partnership for the Green Dividend” (The Partnership). The goals of The Partnership are to demonstrate the applicability of green practices to all American communities and to better document the opportunities emerging from within the green economy. By combining these elements, the Partnership serves both people and place, improving the overall quality of life through economic revitalization and environmental sustainability.

Traditional tools for alleviating social inequity problems are limited in terms of their effectiveness due to the deep economic recession. As government at the local, state, and federal level redefines its role around community economic development, the onus to spur effective economic growth and climate action in the United States increasingly rests on local and regional actors. The Partnership is determined to tap into underserved communities and renewable resources to broaden the base of opportunity within green markets. To successfully advance economic opportunity through climate action in our communities, we must promote paradigm shifting strategies for a more transparent environmental marketplace that allocates goods and services more sustainably, thereby

making green business practices key to economic growth.

The Partnership will use its combined skills and experience to help communities on the micro and macro levels to assess and better align regional resources to achieve those elements vital to success in the green economy: investment capital, market demand, and a skilled and productive labor force that engages all income levels. The Partnership will work with local economic leaders to develop and connect green opportunities to those most in need in our communities. As sustainable practices become the catalyst for local recovery, informed policy will follow; when going green becomes an economic and social equity agenda rather than a partisan one, the United States can truly move into the age of clean energy. The need for a comprehensive strategy is vital to capture the new green economy opportunities, sustainability and equity of labor force opportunities, and small business development as priority issues for our future.

Goals and Framework of the Partnership

Green jobs are a priority of the Obama Administration and our future. According to a report released by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, green jobs such as installation of household insulation, retrofitting of energy systems, and green supply to business and development could provide as much as 10 percent of all new job growth over the next 30 years. Cities and regions are working to develop green industries and products; however, efforts in this area have been somewhat limited by the lagging economy. Success will depend upon a regional approach, public-private collaboration, an in-depth knowledge of the local economy, and deeper relationships between business, government, the labor force, and the community at large.

Traditional economic and workforce systems have to become almost seamless in working together and responsive to the needs of businesses to grow the green economy while serving the needs of displaced, incumbent, and new workers within a region. Furthermore, by integrating the sustainable economy with the sustainable community, companies can more effectively provide local opportunities in the forms of jobs, business investments, and contracts. The interconnected nature of a sustainable economy and the environment requires localized and region-specific approaches that adapt to the dynamic green economy. The demand for different types of workers with adaptive and new skill sets is a direct outcome of the growing green economy.

In order for cities and regions to meet the demand for the green economy, new capacity building through the collaboration of a wide range of civic players is needed. The Partnership is devoted to identifying collaborators, businesses, and industries within communities for measurable green growth. Our goal is to expand the number

and diversity of regional communities with hands-on experience developing and implementing regional clean economy strategies. The Partnership will focus efforts on four main constituencies that must have an increasing role in crafting clean economy strategies.

- 1. Low income Areas**
- 2. Small Businesses**
- 3. Labor Force**
- 4. Minority Communities**

By significantly expanding the proportion and diversity of businesses able to implement green strategies, the Partnership's work will foster a greater understanding of the capacity of sustainable strategies to rebuild the local economy. In the coming 14-month period of local working committees and partnership assistance, we anticipate that the community will experience expanded business participation in support of green strategies, increased speed and ease with which businesses can implement green strategies, higher profits for local businesses, and an increased number of diverse enterprises taking appropriate steps for further prosperity.

The community will gain access to a valuable resource network through the lessons learned by Climate Prosperity's work in other member cities. Contributing to economic growth and equity through participation in green markets and sustainable practices will generate significant momentum for reframing national climate debates. This valuable undertaking on the micro level will provide unique insight to future discussions at a macro level regarding success in the green economy and its impact on our environment and quality of life.

PLC recently announced the release of the second volume of the guidebook series the Economics of Sustainability, "The Dollars and Sense of Green Business," made possible by support from the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. This publication, prepared in collaboration with the American Chamber of Commerce Executives (ACCE), is a continuation of PLC's sustainability agenda and explores the innovation and leadership of 22 chambers of commerce from around the country that are true champions of the green economy. Working with ACCE, PLC will assist in expanding on the outcomes of this project by providing outreach to smaller communities.

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This intersection of economic opportunity and environmental concerns is not yet fully defined. Both sectors are engaged as never before, creating new opportunities to better leverage traditional community reinvestment programs with emerging environmental initiatives. The Partnership's approach combines the efforts of both community reinvestment and environmental affairs programs as a catalyst for social and environmental renewal. Using resources more efficiently is practical for boosting both savings and profits. Therefore, sustainability is a tool for economic success in addition to environmental stewardship.

By providing an accessible path to implement sustainable strategies, The Partnership will help communities more effectively maximize their opportunities in the green economy. Through this work, green economic strategies that are place-based will be recognized as a common sense approach to achieving social equity and regional prosperity.

Conclusion

This initiative plus other locally-based programs advanced by businesses, environmental groups, and equal opportunity organizations, such as Oakland-based Policy-Link, offer promise that "green" will be an equal opportunity, benefiting communities across America. The Partnership provides communities with the means to harness the existing opportunities for growth in their green markets and economies and does so while actively promoting equity and sustainability. By uniting the goals of economic development and environmental sustainability, the Partnership can efficiently address multiple challenges facing American communities and offer equitable solutions for all.

Sustainable Practices in Action: *Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce Green Plus*

Despite the great impact more sustainable practices can have on a company's bottom line, many businesses have yet to 'go green.' It is not an unwillingness to become more sustainable that stands in the way of more environmentally-friendly business methods; rather it's the simple dilemma of where to begin. Many businesses are unsure about how to best implement greener practices, but what company would not jump at the chance to cut costs and reduce waste with assistance in creating a customized sustainability plan? Through the Green Plus program, members of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce receive just that.

Surveys deployed to over 20,000 companies in North Carolina, Ohio, and Pennsylvania revealed that 97 percent of those polled are interested in being known as a successful business committed to their community and their environment. Yet a mere eight percent of these same businesses know where to find affordable information online about improving their sustainable practices. In 2007, with this dilemma in mind, programs at Duke University and UNC Chapel Hill teamed up with the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Chamber of Commerce, local philanthropies, and other area business entities to help make triple bottom line sustainability – defined as strong business performance along with a commitment to the community and the environment – accessible to small employers. The partnership resulted in the creation of the Institute for Sustainable Development and the Green Plus program.

As members of Green Plus, businesses are connected to a forum staffed with Institute Fellows and experienced companies; receive feedback and tips from Duke and UNC graduate students on environmentally-friendly business methods; get connected to mentor companies; are issued a Green Plus How-to Guide including term definitions and easy, medium, and challenging practices; and have access to referrals and links to both regional and national resource organizations. The Green Plus program also offers informational webinars or partnerships with local community colleges for those businesses without internet access.

In order to become a member of the program, applicants must complete a survey addressing the areas of Performance, Planet, and People. Under Performance, businesses are asked about their written strategic plan, accounting practices, and other business methods. Green Plus emphasizes that to be sustainable a company must be financially successful. The Planet section explores issues such as energy use, transportation, and water conservation. To assess a company's true level of sustainability, Green Plus also inquires about their commitment to people—an essential element of Green Plus' vision. Businesses must demonstrate compassion for their employees and an awareness of community needs.

Upon completing the survey, if a company falls short of the program's requirements in any or all of the three areas, they aren't left at square one. Institute Fellows in law, business, environmental studies, or public policy will coach the enterprise in how to become more sustainable and improve their score.

In an effort to spread the program throughout the United States, Green Plus announced a new partnership this past July with ACCE, an organization of 1,250 chamber of commerce members who represent over 1.2 million businesses across the country. ACCE member chambers can join Green Plus at a discounted rate and offer membership to their own associates. Philanthropies are also able to license out the program to interested organizations. Through this expanding national network, businesses around the country are able to share their experiences of going green.

With the combined resources of local universities, charitable organizations, and the business community, companies throughout the Chapel Hill region are now equipped with the tools necessary to employ greener practices. Branding opportunities gained through association to the program also provide members a valuable edge in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Through the Green Plus program, businesses are able to synchronize their practices with the social and environmental needs of their community—all while watching their profits grow. **CI**