



## Action Agenda: *Phase 1*

2008 – 2009

A Report of the  
Indianapolis – Marion County Green Commission

### *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

December 2007

## A Commitment

Our present and future prosperity as a city and as a community of people rests on our intelligence regarding and commitment to the integration of economic progress and environmental stewardship. Economic development rests on the ecological realities of nature and its resources. Communities that are sustainable over time take these realities into account and, subsequently, make informed, thoughtful, and strategic choices about economic and community development strategies. These communities are competitive and prosperous.

In the fall of 2007, we, members of the Indianapolis-Marion County Green Commission, were asked by Mayor Bart Peterson to begin a formal process for achieving a sustainable Indianapolis whereby future economic progress – both of our local economy and our individual households – is fully realized. Our work has been guided by the knowledge that:

- Sustainable practices that explicitly integrate economic vitality and environmental stewardship have been shown to save millions of taxpayer dollars, increase property values, attract investors of many kinds, attract new jobs and businesses, and attract new residents.
- Economic development initiatives – now and certainly in the future – will be less robust and less successful without their explicit consideration of the opportunity costs of not attending to and improving our community's environmental conditions.
- Our competitiveness and our attractiveness as a place to live and work will be influenced more and more by our ability to sustain our economy and lifestyles.

We respectfully submit this **Action Agenda: Phase 1** to Mayor Bart Peterson, Mayor-Elect Greg Ballard, the City-County Council, the Indianapolis business and academic communities, our local nonprofit sector including faith communities, and every family and individual citizen who is invested in the future of our city.

In so doing –

- We choose to build a competitive, prosperous, and sustainable Indianapolis now – ensuring a high quality of life for ourselves and our children and creating a legacy that will sustain future generations in Indianapolis.
- We are committed to enhancing economic development for the central Indiana region through well-informed, sustainable, smart growth strategies for the future.

## Indy GreenPrint

In the spring of 2007, the City of Indianapolis presented the Indy GreenPrint. The GreenPrint sets a vision for a sustainable Indianapolis – a community that contributes to climate protection and practices energy efficiency and conservation. Across the country, the response to environmental changes and resource limits has been local leadership and action. Indianapolis is one of over 750 U.S. cities whose mayors have signed the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. However, it takes serious commitment and follow through to effectively address the environmental and sustainability issues addressed by the Agreement. Indianapolis is one of a growing number of cities that are seriously addressing the commitments of the Agreement by incorporating some form of comprehensive environmental initiative into their operations and outreach, as evidenced by the development of the GreenPrint and the organization of this Green Commission.

The vision articulated in the Indy GreenPrint serves as a local organizing tool that our community can use to guide and integrate our multiple efforts to improve economic and environmental vitality. The GreenPrint is a statement of general sustainability principles in six policy areas:

- ❶ **Energy and Emissions:** Decrease energy demands and improve air quality.
- ❷ **Natural Resource Stewardship:** Protect the natural environment and preserve neighborhood quality of life.
- ❸ **Materials and Waste Management:** Minimize waste, recycle, and purchase eco-efficiently.
- ❹ **Smart Transit:** Create new options for moving around the Indianapolis region.
- ❺ **Smart Development:** Create people-oriented development with smart land use.
- ❻ **Community Education:** Encourage residents to do their part.

For each of these six policy areas, the GreenPrint highlights City Hall Steps and articulates a Community Challenge. City Hall Steps are the primary responsibility of city government itself. The Community Challenge is a challenge to all types of businesses, residents, faith-based institutions, and other community members to actively participate in both identifying the various means by which to achieve sustainability and putting those means into practice on an individual-level and on a daily basis.

## Indianapolis-Marion County Green Commission

Mayor Peterson established the Green Commission by Executive Order in July 2007 to take on the Community Challenges articulated in the GreenPrint. The Mayor asked us – the Green Commission – to develop a comprehensive Community Action Plan to: achieve the vision of the Indy GreenPrint; work with the City in prioritizing and implementing recommendations outlined in this and future action agendas; establish specific commitments with milestones, measurable standards, and targets for each commitment; provide public oversight for the plan's implementation; and challenge the entire community to actively participate in the achievement of the GreenPrint vision. Commission members were appointed by the Mayor for two-year terms to represent diverse constituencies in our community including diverse business interests, public utilities, community development, academia, public schools, public transportation, public health, labor, research and consulting, environmental causes, and more.

## This Report

We recognize that economic vitality and environmental responsibility are interdependent and complementary, and the relationship between these two objectives is the foundation of a community's sustainability over time. This **Action Agenda: Phase 1** outlines an initial set of recommendations designed to achieve the integrated goals of enhancing economic prosperity and maintaining a healthy environment in order to ensure a vibrant, sustainable Indianapolis.

The initial recommendations we outline here begin to address the GreenPrint's Community Challenges in regard to **Energy and Emissions, Natural Resource Stewardship, and Smart Development**. This set of initial recommendations represents the first step in the development of a Community Action Plan that will address the Community Challenges in all six areas of the GreenPrint in order to accomplish the larger objective of supporting sustainability as a value for doing business and conducting ourselves, as government, as private companies, as homeowners, and as community members who want our city to prosper for decades and centuries to come. Our ability to support and achieve sustainability as a business and community value will directly contribute to our prosperity.

## Initial Recommendations: An Action Agenda

We organized ourselves into three committees and several subcommittees and met during the fall of 2007 to identify a preliminary set of recommendations to meet the Community Challenges in the GreenPrint's **Energy and Emissions, Natural Resource Stewardship, and Smart Development** areas. These recommendations are listed below and discussed in more detail in the full Commission report.

It is important to note that many of the recommendations in this report overlap and are dependent upon or are mutually supportive of one another in a synergistic way. As such, in determining a strategy for implementation of a subset of these recommendations, policy makers should explicitly consider the relationships between the recommendations in order to be most successful. One of the next steps for us as Green Commission members is to outline exactly that – a subset of highest priority recommendations that fit together synergistically and serve as a valuable starting point for implementation.

## **① Energy and Emissions:**

Decrease energy demands and improve air quality.

High environmental standards and strong economic performance are not mutually exclusive goals. Instead, they typically accompany one another. Current and future economic development initiatives will be less robust and less successful without their explicit consideration of the opportunity costs of not attending to and improving our community's environmental conditions. Our competitiveness and our attractiveness as a place to live and work will be influenced more and more by our ability to sustain our economy and lifestyles.

### **Recommendation 1:**

Establish a One-Stop Shop for business and public access to comprehensive sustainability resources. Establish an internet and physical presence.

### **Recommendation 2:**

Evaluate and pursue incentives to advance air quality, alternative energy use, and energy efficiency.

### **Recommendation 3:**

Connect builders and developers with a range of voluntary programs for green building that encourage market-driven green construction.

### **Recommendation 4:**

Survey consumers and industry professionals to assess their current knowledge of and interest in sustainable buildings as well as their perceived impediments to and motivations for building green.

### **Recommendation 5:**

Create incentives for developers and builders of green buildings.

### **Recommendation 6:**

Create educational opportunities for industry professionals and consumers to learn more about green building.

### **Recommendation 7:**

Identify funding to train building inspectors for green buildings.

### **Recommendation 8:**

Continue the City of Indianapolis' work to develop efficiency standards for buildings utilized by or controlled by the City.

### **Recommendation 9:**

Determine specific ways to encourage the use of green infrastructure – including green rooftops – in commercial, residential, and institutional projects.

## ② Natural Resource Stewardship:

Protect the natural environment and preserve neighborhood quality of life.

Abundant water supplies, safe drinking water, clean rivers and streams, high quality forest canopy, open space, parklands, and diverse natural areas are the most basic underpinnings of the sustainability of our urban environment. We envision Indianapolis as a progressive, healthy, and self-sustaining community. Natural resource stewardship is a key factor in achieving that vision.

### Recommendation 10:

Identify and protect high priority natural areas.

### Recommendation 11:

Increase parklands and open space to a level that is comparable to national averages based on population.

### Recommendation 12:

Fully implement the recommendations for the Trust for Public Land's report, *Growing Green: A Parks and People Strategy for Indianapolis*.

### Recommendation 13:

Continue the city-wide NeighborWoods initiative and the current objective to plant 100,000 trees in the city by 2015.

### Recommendation 14:

Continue the functions of the Indianapolis-Marion County Tree Board.

### Recommendation 15:

Continue important efforts to avoid unnecessary damage to mature tree canopy.

### Recommendation 16:

Sustain and more efficiently manage Marion County's water resources to ensure our water supply remains clean, safe, and abundant.

### Recommendation 17:

Ensure a safe and adequate drinking water supply and reduce neighborhood flooding by improving stormwater management and providing incentives for low impact development.

### Recommendation 18:

Improve environmental awareness and stewardship among Indianapolis institutions, businesses, and citizens toward natural resources.

### Recommendation 19:

Establish on-going public education around sustainability concepts and practices in order to foster environmental stewardship.

### **③ Smart Development:**

Create people-oriented development with smart land use.

Our vision for Indianapolis and its constituent neighborhoods and spaces is one of character, vitality, and sustainability. As such, we rely upon urban design strategies that place emphasis on practices that integrate design principles to efficiently use land, result in livable communities, create a strong sense of place, increase overall efficiency, support mobility on foot and bike, and protect the natural environment.

#### **Recommendation 20:**

Prioritize geographic areas within center city neighborhoods that have the highest development potential – if not for the presence of brownfield concerns.

#### **Recommendation 21:**

Encourage developers to redevelop brownfield sites in center city neighborhoods – initially, in the geographic areas that have the highest development potential.

#### **Recommendation 22:**

Publicize and recognize brownfield redevelopment success stories.

#### **Recommendation 23:**

Improve zoning to support higher density development.

#### **Recommendation 24:**

Identify specific, priority urban development areas where existing and planned community assets overlap – creating opportunities for higher density, mixed use, connected developments. Consider designating one or more of these priority areas for a pilot initiative that encourages sustainable development practices and projects.

#### **Recommendation 25:**

Directly support the creation and use of multi-modal transportation.

#### **Recommendation 26:**

Strengthen public and alternative schools in the center city, and identify schools as the center of healthy neighborhoods.

#### **Recommendation 27:**

Invest in community organizing around quality of life planning.

#### **Recommendation 28:**

Invest in neighborhood-level sustainability initiatives attending to both the built and natural environments.

#### **Recommendation 29:**

Support and direct neighborhood residents' efforts to connect with the resources and build the relationships necessary to effectively implement neighborhood plans.

## What's Next

We have been asked by Mayor Peterson to continue our discussions through the course of our tenure in order to define an implementation plan for this **Action Agenda: Phase 1**, to advise on City initiatives, to monitor the City's progress on its commitments, and to begin addressing the second set of three issue areas outlined in the GreenPrint.

In November, voters in Indianapolis-Marion County elected a new mayor. We stand poised, as citizens of this community, to work with and on behalf of Mayor-Elect Ballard's new administration, and we request Mayor-Elect Ballard's leadership in that regard. We know from the experience of other cities that city government and the mayor must exercise strong leadership in this regard.

The organizational structure and process we have established – in addition to this first **Action Agenda** – now represents a community asset on which continued progress may be built. Successful and innovative models of public-private partnerships centered on sustainability issues exist throughout the U.S. These are worthy of discussion and exploration in terms of the future of Indy GreenPrint, the Green Commission, and the initial **Action Agenda** we have articulated here. All of us as corporate and private citizens bear responsibility to be informed about and fully committed to this work if we are to be stewards of our community's future who make choices that will sustain and enhance our competitiveness and prosperity.