

Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG)
Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan
Economic Development/Sustainability Partnership Group Meeting Summary
October 2, 2009, 1:00p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Attendees:

- Alicia Archibald, Fort Carson Sustainability
- Jane Ard-Smith, Sierra Club
- Mary Barber, Fort Carson Sustainability
- Craig Casper, PPACG
- Bob Cope, City of Colorado Springs
- Kate Hatten, PPACG
- Megan Lane, GBSM
- DeAnne McCann, El Paso County Economic Development
- David Menter, Mountain Metro
- Andy Mountain, GBSM
- Rich Muzzy, PPACG
- Bassel Nelson, Army OneSource
- Sarah White, PPACG

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Phase 2 Update/Status:

Ms. Sarah White started introductions. Mr. Andy Mountain and Ms. Megan Lane gave a presentation about the status of the sustainability/economic development section of the Growth Plan. For more information regarding the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan and to view the PDF version of GBSM's presentation, please visit:

http://www.ppacg.org/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=268&Itemid=49

Task Overview:

Mr. Mountain explained the purpose and scope of the sustainability/economic development section of the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan (Growth Plan). He stated this section of the final Growth Plan report will include brief summaries about existing plans in region (e.g. Operation 6035, Dream City 2020, Quality of Life). PPACG and GBSM want to build off of existing work and not recreate it. The Quality of Life Indicators (QLI) report will be a basis for indicators to measure progress. However, the sustainability/economic development effort will not be confined to just using the QLI process.

The partnership group provides important expert perspective and will assist in developing an action plan with recommendations and timelines, assigning responsibilities to those action items and giving us a "reality check". GBSM and PPACG will conduct a session with a broader public audience at the Southern Colorado Sustainable Communities Conference and Expo on November 4th from 3:00 to 4:00 pm to discuss key industries and opportunities for sustainability/economic development related to Fort Carson growth.

Work Completed to Date:

GBSM is compiling examples of best practices of successful sustainability efforts in different cities in the country and is continuing to gather information related to other regional planning efforts. GBSM and PPACG conducted interviews over the summer with key business leaders, Fort Carson sustainability personnel, planners with the City of Colorado Springs and Fountain and public officials and civic leaders in the City and County of Pueblo.

Best Practices research:

Ms. Lane stated that in analyzing the best practices for sustainability in different cities, the most successful practices are highly integrated plans, easy to understand, use a broad set of metrics that are adaptable, regularly communicate progress, focus on select industries and implement quick fixes by going after “low hanging fruit”.

Community Perceptions:

The interviews conducted in the summer provided insight to community perceptions of why sustainability may be difficult to implement. Some major themes expressed during the interviews include:

- There is a lack of strong regional leadership to deliver results.
- People struggle with understand what “sustainability” means.
- It is hard for businesses to embrace sustainability if the up-front costs are high, even though the long-term return on investment may be higher.
- Some people feel opportunities related to Fort Carson growth have been missed. People do not understand what troop increases truly mean for the community – it is gradual, not immediate. People are tired of hearing about troop increases without really seeing tangible (immediate) impacts. It is difficult to measure Fort Carson-specific impacts in the community.
- The community does not understand barriers Fort Carson faces in implementing sustainable plans. There is little understanding of what Fort Carson decisions are actually made locally. Most procurement decisions are made on a national level, not installation level.
- The Pueblo community feels like they’re not influenced by Fort Carson growth, although they do have military families living in their community.
- There is a lot of competition and little collaboration in regional planning efforts.

Regional economic/sustainability planning efforts:

In addition to the list of community planning efforts presented, the following efforts should be included:

- South Academy Corridor Plan. This plan incorporates transit oriented development and will examine the possibilities of having inter-modal systems (e.g. Bus Rapid Transit system and/or street car system).
- A sustainable energy task force initiated by the Sierra Club and Fort Carson.
- Colorado Springs Utility “green team” and sustainability planning efforts.
- Colorado College’s sustainability efforts/plan.
- Green Cities’ efforts.
- Mayor Lionel Rivera’s efforts to attract green business.

Constraints:

There is a lack of trust among citizens towards elected leaders. Many people do not understand and do not “buy-in” to the sustainability efforts. There is no unifying community vision, because, other than the military and natural features, Colorado Springs does not have a cultural identity.

Opportunities:

Mr. Mountain highlighted renewable energy, solid waste and procurement as areas of potential economic opportunity for the region and industries that can help Fort Carson and the larger community achieve sustainability goals. There is a lot of overlap among the regional planning efforts around renewable energy.

Although the City of Colorado Springs is undergoing financial hardship, it has the opportunity to reinvent itself as an area of sustainability, including workforce training and recreational/ecotourism. There are national trends, federal regulations and funding opportunities around integrated planning and sustainability that may benefit local sustainability efforts. It is anticipated that there will be even more federally supported sustainability programs under the Obama administration.

This effort should also focus on incentives for keeping soldiers living in the area (i.e., job opportunities, work training, education, etc...).

Metrics & Indicators:

The sustainability/economic development effort of the Growth Plan will leverage QLI for sustainability indicators. The group discussed the problems of relying entirely on the QLI metrics, although it was agreed that they should be a starting point. The group offered the following suggestions for measuring progress related to regional sustainability/economic development:

- In order to integrate regional plans, a base standard should be established. Currently there is none.
- Indicators need to focus on identified goals.
- What gets measured gets managed. We need to understand what we want to manage and then apply metrics to that.
- GBSM should talk to other people who worked on QLI to see what they captured and what their process was in developing indicators.

5. Next Steps:

Southern Colorado Sustainability Conference on November 3-4 at the Double Tree Hotel. PPACG and GBSM will conduct a sustainability/economic development session on November 4th from 3:00 – 4:00 pm in the Main Ballroom.

GBSM and PPACG will conduct more one-on-one interviews, will compile and finalize best practices and will continue to do more research.

Report/draft early part of spring 2010.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.