

Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG)
Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan
Economic Development/Sustainability Partnership Group Meeting Summary
December 17, 2009, 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Attendees:

- Tim Amthor, Pikes Peak Workforce Center
- Alicia Archibald, Fort Carson
- Jane Ard-Smith, Sierra Club
- Mary Barber, Fort Carson
- Lisa Cochrun, City of Fountain
- Bob Cope, City of Colorado Springs
- Kate Hatten, PPACG
- Megan Lane, GBSM
- Andy Mountain, GBSM
- Rich Muzzy, PPACG
- Annie Oatman-Gardner
- Gary Rapp, Recycling Coalition of Colorado Springs
- Sarah White, PPACG

1. Welcome and Introductions

2. Southern Colorado Sustainability Conference Session Recap:

Ms. Sarah White started introductions. Mr. Andy Mountain and Ms. Megan Lane provided a recap of the workshop session at the Southern Colorado Sustainability Conference. About 20 people participated at the session. Overall the session was successful, although there was not enough time to discuss all recommendations.

3. Phase 2 Regional Growth Plan Update/Project Status:

The draft report will be finished mid-January and the group will have a chance to review the draft report in early February. The final report will be around 30-40 pages with around 5 ½ pages devoted to the Fort Carson sustainability goals. The final report will also have a section devoted to national trends, best (and worst) practices and other regional efforts with some high-level focus on some efforts and links to plans and websites for others. The rest of the report will discuss challenges, opportunities, recommendations and next steps.

Some key observations made by GBSM include the following:

- Plans and sustainability efforts in other communities are usually specific to those regions. Any sustainability plan for this region will have to be tailored to fit with the unique ecological, political and philosophical characteristics of the Pikes Peak region to make the plan salient.
- Any metrics for this plan will need to be flexible.
- Although there is a core group of people dedicated to sustainability in the region, the broader community “mind” is more conservative and could meet certain sustainability principles and goals with resistance.
- It will be important to initially aim for the low-hanging fruit and/or the quick-fixes.

The group then discussed the following categories GBSM identified as opportunity sectors for the region:

- Construction, Retro-Fitting and Building Maintenance
 - Energy efficiency is captured in this section.
- Renewable Energy
 - There is great potential for renewable energy because of the current state, federal and community support. However, it will be a very competitive sector to attract to the region. The recommendations will provide more of a “blanket overview” of renewable energy.
- Solid Waste and Recycling
 - Recommendations for this area will focus on combining on/off-post recycling to create additional demand to support the need for a municipal recycling facility.
 - The recommendations will also address the difficulty in tracking regional recycling levels and the need for a better system of tracking diversion rates.
- Education and Training
 - The recommendation will focus on marrying current skill sets with employment opportunities. It will also look to training/workforce programs like the partnership between Vestas and Pueblo Community College.
- Transportation
 - Transportation is an area that will have a full chapter in the final Growth Plan report with more detailed information regarding traffic congestion, lack of public transit and car-less mobility. One potential recommendation for this section of the report may be to find out how to change the traffic peaks at Fort Carson (e.g. trying to get units to change PT schedules to reduce heavy traffic in the morning and reduce the amount of driving times for Soldiers entering and leaving the post).
- Regional Collaboration
 - Although there is a lot of communication, there is not enough regional partnership around sustainability or economic development. Collaboration is revenue driven.
 - Recommendations will include the development of a regional sustainability plan and the creation of an economic development district.

Discussion:

The Pikes Peak Workforce Center has a veteran workforce investment program grant for renewable energy training, home auditing and retrofits. The certification from the program is national, not just limited to the state. However, the grant is available statewide and the trainees do not need to obtain a job in the region. Keeping the trained workforce in the region will be difficult without connecting them to available jobs. Pikes Peak Community College, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, and Colorado College also have energy audit and retrofit programs.

Renewable (alternative) fuels should be mentioned in this report as the region could be more competitive in this field. The City of Colorado Springs fleet is a success story because it ranks 6th out of the 50 largest cities in the U.S. for use of alternative fuels and has positively contributed to better air quality since 2003. The alternative fuels are locally produced within 500

miles at a mid-sized refinery. However, use of alternative fuels is based on costs and has been cancelled and reinstated based on costs.

Waste haulers send single stream recycling to Denver, which gets weighed and separated in Denver. These companies do not have any requirements to report waste diversion rates to the Colorado Springs region. However, a new contract between the City of Colorado Springs and Waste Management requires the company to provide single stream recycling at City facilities and to report the recycling amounts from city facilities for the Quality of Life Indicators report.

The Pueblo City Council has discussed pursuing mandatory recycling. Pueblo is looking into creating a municipal recycling facility, since there is more space and rail in the area. It was suggested that waste-to-energy or biomass projects may also be other areas the region can pursue. Mr. Gary Rapp provided copies of a November 5, 2009 interoffice memorandum from Jerry Forte, CEO of Colorado Springs Utilities to the Colorado Springs City Council regarding a resolution accepting a grant from the United State Department of Agriculture Forest Service for the 2010 Woody Biomass Utilization Program.

It was noted that job creation should not be the only focus, as some recommendations may not lead to more jobs but may be focused on enhancing regional collaboration. Also, it will be important not to lean too much on recommendations that may only lead to lower paying labor jobs and less on opportunities to attract higher paying professional jobs. For example, are there opportunities for existing high-tech industries in the renewable energy sector?

This effort may also be more accepted by some people in the community if it shows connections between Fort Carson growth, economic development, transportation, workforce training, renewable energy, etc, without calling out sustainability.

5. Next Steps:

- The next partnership group meeting will be on February 11, 2010 at 9:30 am. PPACG will send a draft report to the group before the meeting.
- COL Robert McLaughlin, Garrison Commander at Fort Carson, will meet with the signatories of the letter of commitment for sustainability on February 2, 2010.
- PPACG will add a link to the 2008 Fort Carson Sustainability Report on www.ppacg.org.