Potential work groups or areas of work for sustainability committee

The work this committee would be taking on is all-encompassing and intimidating. The following are initial suggestions for dividing the task into more manageable pieces. Smaller work groups would enable the group to take time to do thoughtful research on a variety of topics. This should allow recommendations to other committees to be effective and anticipate questions from council.

Building Codes

Talk to:

1.) Mayor

2.) Planning Director/Building Inspection

3.) Utilities Director

Examine building codes to see if they promote energy efficiency.

Areas to examine:

1.) Water efficient hardware

2.) Landscaping that is native and provides shade and efficient water permeation

3.) Building configuration: shape, size, interior layout, solar orientation, strategic construction for seasonal light

4.) Building shell: walls, windows, doors, roof

5.) Building materials: lumber from sustainable forest, engineered walls, material's durability measured in life-cycle cost, material toxicity, materials-reduce, reuse, recycle

6.) When looking at materials used, examine embodied energy and life cycle analysis

7.) Inside energy use: heating/cooling systems, hot water, lighting, ventilation, appliances, insulation

Should we create a set of suggested standards that we can give to builders/developers? Some kind of incentives for meeting these standards?

Look at how other communities have addressed sustainable practices in their building codes.

USGBC (US Green Building Council) has LEED certification for residential buildings. May be a good guide for future policy improvements. Should review.

Are there ordinances that support/discourage the use of solar or wind energy in residences?

How do we foster attractive design?

How do we foster compact building design?

Tree and Vegetation Plantings

Talk to:

1.) Tree Commission and staff

2.) Park and Recreation Director

3.) Utilities Director or Planning Director about stormwater vegetation

Information to gather and questions to ask:

Examine what the city is doing with tree planting to promote shade. How do they determine what trees to plant where? Instructions for care of tree once planted?

Examine what the city is doing to promote/suppress the use of native plants i.e. prairies, meadow.

What are the city's requirements for turfgrass?

Avoid grass seeding with plastic nets?

Ask for budget over last 3 years and future budget for trees, vegetation, and maintenance. How much of budget is for shade trees? Maintenance cost includes cutting of grass i.e. salaries, gas, equipment etc. and application of pesticides/herbicides.

If increase budget for shade trees, what will we get for coverage?

Why are we not using buffalo grass in parks?

Should we recommend an ordinance to prevent the removal of healthy, mature trees on private property?

City Buildings and Property

Talk to:

1.) Mayor

2.) Utilities Director

3.) Public Works Director

Information to gather and questions to ask.

Examine what the city has done to make city buildings more energy efficient.

What else can we do to decrease the energy load of city buildings? What is the estimated cost? What is in the budget?

Examine what the city has done to make the vehicle fleet more energy efficient? What is the cost? What is in the budget?

Has the city examined the trade-offs using cement vs. pavement in parking lots and streets?

Has the city examined necessary street widths recently? How does this relate to fire equipment and the possible need to decreasse the size of trucks?

How is the city making bike routes safer?

Land Use

Talk to:

1.) Mayor

2.) Planning Director

Review city's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Research land use policies of other cities that are working toward sustainability.

Examine ways to efficiently use land. Items to look at:

1.) density targets

2.) compact building designs

3.) configuration of lots

4.) parking requirements

5.) acceptable home and building sizes

6.) range of housing opportunities

7.) promoting in-fill/look at impediments to in-fill

8.) promoting reuse of existing buildings

9.) need for future urban facilities esp. with fringe development

10.) new, creative housing solutions like secondary or accessory units in residential areas i.e. granny flats

11). Look at placement of development and how to direct it- is it safe to build across Hwy 51? should there be better regulations to provide for pedestrian and bike access?

12.) How to better protect environmentally sensitive areas?

Community Mobilization

This is an essential element if we are to become a sustainable community. This work group will build community support through feedback sessions, education, and events. Some of the recommendations that come out of this committee will be common sense, some will cost big dollars, and some will meet with resistance. Community support will be essential if we are to implement policies and ordinances that will build a livable future.

Tasks for this work group will include:

1.) Organizing focus groups as needed to generate ideas and feedback on how we can be more sustainable.

2.) Keep local press and social media updated on committee work.

3.) Plan fun family events centered around a theme, for example combine Arbor Day and Earth Day and turn it into a "tree" event/celebration.

4.) Work with school science teachers to examine how they are promoting responsible environment citizens.

5.) Organize educational events esp. around difficult issues.