

# **Working Groups Kick-off**

## **Green Economy breakout session**

### **Comment Digest**

*This was the first meeting of the Green Economy Workgroup  
as part of the Sustainable DC Planning process*

November 29th 2011 6:30 –8:30 p.m.  
*Walter E. Washington Convention Center*

**General Public Attendance: 29**

#### **Sustainable DC Attendees:**

Howard Ways, University of the District of Columbia – Workgroup Government Co-Chair  
Eric Crenshaw, District Department of Employment Services – Alternate Government Co-Chair  
Andrea Limauro, District Office of Planning - Sustainable DC Staff

#### **Agenda 7:30pm to 8:30pm:**

- Attendees Introductions
- Working Group and overall plan process/timeline
- Group Priorities brainstorming
- Summary & Next Steps

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**Meeting Summary:** Howard started the meeting with attendees introductions and going over the meeting agenda which included discussing project timeline, roles and responsibilities, and the Statement of Agreement. No comments or questions from attendees on any of the above items.

Group moved on to deciding next meeting date which was set for December 13, 2011 at 6.30pm. The location, 1100 4th Street SW - 2nd Floor Hearing Room, was determined after the meeting.

Howard facilitated a broad discussion of what the group believes the Green Economy for DC should be, do and look like. The discussion was very broad and well participated by attendees. Comments reflected the attendees' diverse personal and professional backgrounds which spanned from small-business owners (mostly energy related), government staff and social/community activism.

Broadly speaking the group's concerns and recommendations fell under 5 broad categories:

- Regulatory framework
- Consumer behavior and community education
- Entrepreneurship
- Job training
- Capital and financing

There was agreement that all of these categories and the Green Economy in general had to operate under the broader umbrella of social justice and the triple bottom line framework.

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Comments were noted flip boards. The following summary is a compilation of the comments that were communicated by participants during the breakout session. The summary does not include direct quotes and does not represent a consensus.

#### **Feedback Summary:**

- Green Economy should not be just about jobs
- Procurement is a crucial component of the Green Economy as it can have a very large effect on environmental indicators. When talking about procurement one has to remember the consumer side of needing to educate consumers on the value of green purchasing. By affecting the public procurement system one can have a huge impact since the size of public procurement is very large. Could DC replicate the greening of Federal procurement spurred by Obama's Executive Order?. Also, private sector green procurement practices should be looked at e.g. Wal-Mart's efforts very valuable example.
- Need to focus on supporting local employers and businesses
- One big task for the green economy is to reduce the large income inequality, poverty rates and health disparities that define DC
- The green economy encapsulates the elements of the other eight working groups
- Need to add "culture" to the green economy equation starting from green literacy for residents and consumers to job training for prospective employees
- Need to work on job readiness
- Green education needs to affect the way people think at all moment and for all actions not just a one-time deal
- Look at best practices from other cities
- Need to better brand DC as a sustainable city. Other cities (ie. Portland, Seattle, San Francisco) have banked on branding themselves as green leaders even where DC might have an advantage.
- Triple bottom line business practices should be the standard against which the businesses in the green economy are evaluated against. However, it is hard to measure the impacts of triple bottom line when businesses have already a hard time keeping track of just the financial side of things – how can they keep track of their social and environmental impacts?
- Guiding principle of the green economy is that the majority of the businesses will operate from a triple bottom perspective – that environmental impacts are equally as important as profit and social equity.
- Need to rely on third party certification to help businesses with their tracking of triple bottom line. However, should the model be an international model (e.g. B-Corp or GRI Reporting) or should it be a local certification (e.g. SBNOW)? Should it be government run or independent?
- Need to identify what are the economic engines in DC that the city and business community can invest in. Tourism was identified as a chief driver of the economy.

- We need to recognize the different approach and needs of service-based businesses from product-based businesses – especially important since DC’s economy relies heavily on service industry.
- Need to better leverage international resources and assets based in D.C. including embassies, brain trust, potential financing and visibility
- Need to explore potential of Pay in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) programs for institutions like the World Bank, IMF etc. that do not pay taxes to the District
- Create better infrastructure for business – what do businesses need to succeed in the D.C.?
- Create a culture of entrepreneurship – NYC is known for an entrepreneurial spirit, why isn’t that the same for DC?
- Look at the other working groups and base our goals on their goals. Green Economy could be the driver to achieve everything else in the Plan.
- Create a reward system that rewards businesses for doing the right thing
- Green jobs have to move the environmental needle – can’t just be jobs, they need to have a concrete impact on sustainability and environmental improvement
- Help businesses find capital
- What is the (economic) context we are working in?
- Look at the good programs already existing and working well and how they are expiring. Can we make them more permanent? Should we make them more permanent? Somebody’s comment was that green businesses should after a while become independent from subsidies
- Arts and culture in the District are a big driver in the city that is not going away – need to leverage that
- Volunteerism and underground economy also need to be factored in
- Leverage open source software and DYS communities
- Need to develop a Grand Vision first
- Consumer side is missing in the conversation. Cannot build an economy that doesn’t have customers. No customers no businesses. How do we get people to want to buy solar panels and other green products?
- Need to develop an existing condition analysis of the green economy in DC
- Need a list of best practices
- Need to create a listserv or Wiki for the group
- Initiatives that rely exclusively on government grants are inherently unsustainable. The goal is to move these types of initiatives to a market based approach or solution.

**Next Steps:**

Next Workgroup meeting: December 13, 2011 at 6.30pm at 1100 4th Street SW - 2nd Floor Hearing Room.

Agenda TBD

**Questions or Comments:****Green Economy Workgroup Contacts:**

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