

# **Intergovernmental Green Building Group (IGBG) and Energy Advisory Committee (EAC) Joint Meeting**

Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments  
777 North Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC

**July 12, 2012 IGBG Meeting Highlights- DRAFT**

## **Attendance**

- **Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions**, Olayinka Kolawole, EAC Chair
  - Attendees and those on the phone introduced themselves.
- **Opening Remarks**, Leah Boggs, COG DEP
  - This workshop addresses the issue that underserved communities are often left behind in green building efforts. Among the questions that will be addressed are: What does equitable development look like? How can we make the Washington region more sustainable and whole? How do we advance the goals of social equity? And How can the Better Buildings Program recognize the unique aspects of the Washington area?
- **John Thomas – EPA Office of Sustainable Communities**
  - Mr. Thomas discussed a number of programs that EPA provides to help communities implement sustainable practices. The Office of Sustainable Communities works with approximately 120 communities per year, providing technical assistance and other resources to promote sustainable and equitable development. Equity plays an important role in decision-making around green building and smart growth. It promotes consideration of the “triple bottom line” as well as cobenefits and tradeoffs.
  - The Smart Growth Implementation Assistance program provides selected communities a multi-disciplinary contractor team to perform technical assistance over several days and provide a report to help implement smart growth initiatives.
  - The Green Infrastructure Demonstration Project performs design charrettes in state capitals highlighting best practices in low impact development.
  - The Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities program provides quick, targeted technical assistance directly to communities. Past project themes have included a small town and rural planning workshop, linking green building with economic development, linking development with water quality, developing a walkability guidebook, and developing green streets. The program brings together priorities for affordable housing and redevelopment but also integrates regional siting priorities and green building.
  - The Green Building Toolkit was developed in collaboration with EPA Region 4. It provides information on green building issues such as urban heat islands, light pollution, and energy efficiency; analyzes policy holes and obstacles; describes effective green building policies; includes model ordinances; and provides an assessment tool that communities can use to evaluate local green building policy.
- **Carlton Eley – Planning and Black Community Division of American Planning Association**
  - Mr. Eley provided a broad overview on the topic of equitable development, discussed case studies, and suggested strategies for growth and sustainability. Equitable development is an approach for meeting the needs of underserved communities through policies and practices that reduce disparities. Stakeholders must consider the social implications of land use and planning decisions, and attempt to “expand the pie”—rather than cutting it into smaller

pieces—to reach the point of parity.

- The Bethel Center in West Garfield, Chicago is located in a lower-income neighborhood where public transit was residents' "lifeline." As the transit station was at risk of closing, the Bethel Center was built. The site is a former brownfield, and the building hosts multiple uses to strengthen the neighborhood. It has a green roof and achieved LEED gold certification in 2009.
- The 2008 King County Comprehensive Plan Update provides an example of how to incorporate equity and environmental justice in planning documents. It took a proactive, preventative approach by focusing on health disparities.
- Fall Creek Place, Indianapolis is an example of a high vacancy "ghost town" that was revitalized into an affordable residential community.
- There are many commonalities between smart growth principles and equitable development principles. Local governments should promote equitable development because it is profitable, and it is a social responsibility.

– **Jason Hercules – USGBC**

- Mr. Hercules discussed USGBC's Playbook for Green Buildings and Neighborhoods, which is a web-based document designed to help local governments advance green buildings, neighborhoods, and infrastructure. It encourages participants to learn more about available resources and issues, to plan for short and long-term changes, and to take high-impact actions early.
- The green neighborhoods section of the Playbook uses LEED-ND as its primary tool for action. LEED-ND provides a comprehensive approach to sustainable communities. The system does not guarantee equity, but using it appropriately will open that conversation with developers and stakeholders. It is critical that all players are at the table in the development process.
- A few case studies provided examples of how communities have used the LEED structure to pursue equitable development. In Bellingham, WA, officials used LEED-ND to set objectives for development, identified areas of deficiency, and used brownfield cleanup to gather interest in redevelopment projects. The Chicago Housing Authority used LEED-ND as a structuring tool and framework for development, offering incentives to project teams that met LEED-ND objectives. The City of Nashville used LEED-ND to develop a form-based code.
- Strategies for equitable development can include development incentives, such as expedited review or density bonuses; financial incentives such as take credits, abatements, fee reductions and waivers, or grants; and other mechanisms such as marketing assistance.
- The Affordable Green Neighborhoods Grant Program is a collaboration with Bank of America that provides funding for equitable green building projects that lack funding.

– **Jonathan Cohen – US DOE Better Building Neighborhoods Program**

- Mr. Cohen gave an overview of grant programs offered by the Department of Energy Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy. The programs are funded through an economic development program from the stimulus. They are designed to produce sustained economic benefits through continued energy savings, job skills, reducing the need for expanded generation capacity, and health benefits by improving indoor air quality.
- Thus far, 41 grants have been awarded with a total of \$508 million. Individual grants have been \$1.4 million to \$40 million each.
- The grants are intended to promote innovation through demonstration projects, learning what is effective and replicable in energy efficiency and renewable energy. There is room for failure built into the program to encourage implementation of new and untested strategies. They encourage industry partnerships and investments, for example through loan loss reserves that facilitate additional funding.

- The goal is to retrofit over 10,000 buildings, achieving 15 to 30% energy savings and reduce the cost of energy efficiency retrofitting by 20%. The program also tests ideas for incentives and financing, and how to engage communities, businesses, and individuals in making energy improvements. DOE has partnered with Maryland's BE SMART program, and Virginia's EECBG and SEP grants. Additionally, DOE is conducting a Business Model Study to analyze key actors in the efficiency retrofit market, and provide viable business models.

## DISCUSSION -

- What are some of the challenges that communities participating the EPA programs face?
  - Some issues include implementing district energy from a planning and zoning perspective; accommodating both redevelopment and stormwater management; developing planning procedures without formal policies, such as scorecards and checklists; and developing integrated planning techniques which bridge "silos of excellence."
- Are there examples of blending both sustainability and equity?
  - The Regenes community development project in Columbia, SC provides a good example.
- What policies can be put in place to encourage equitability and sustainable development while avoiding gentrification?
  - A suite of policies and practices are needed. Inclusionary zones for new units, commercial linkage fees, and community benefit agreements are some examples of helpful policies. Gentrification often takes place on a small-scale, project by project basis, so comprehensive planning is needed to direct development away from that.
- How can we get elected officials to integrate equitable development practices?
  - It's critical to get ahead of the planning and development process. Involving leaders in workgroups on equitable practices is a good start.
- How can we move lessons learned from pilot projects into common practices?
  - It requires continued emphasis and training. Often projects are completed and there is not a clear document or synthesis of lessons learned. To the extent that findings can be clearly communicated, there is a greater chance that they will be adopted. In terms of training, using apprenticeships in community agreements, rather than just "checkbox" employment quotas, can help build lasting impact. A good example is the Kansas City Green Impact Zone.