

# Mississippi Urban Forest Council

## Sustainable Practices

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If the governing body of a small community, is to be sustainable, it must increase its tax base by providing job opportunities to its citizens living within its corporate limits. Sustainable practices can provide the framework to create opportunities for growth in the job market, increased tourism, and provide for a safe and healthy environment.

Manufactured goods and services flowing into a community and cash flowing out, weakens a community, leading to poverty and a decay of environmental services. Cycling goods and services within a community, keeps the cash flow within the community's economy giving citizens control of their own destiny, and lessening the effects of outside economic fluctuations.

To jump start this you must maximize the use of your greatest resources, the imagination and skills of the people (think out of the box) in the community, and make wise choices in regard to the earth resources, such as, soil, water, fauna and flora.

Sustainable practices can provide for a higher quality of life as well as a healthier environment, but always consider, how can you use this to create jobs and recycle cash flow in your economy?

The following list of sustainable practices should provide a framework for a richer and more diverse community experience.

### Recycling

The establishment of a business opportunity- by collecting, recycling and dispersing used debris.

- Sell metal debris that is not restorable or reusable as scrap metal.
- Sell glass, aluminum, plastic, paper, wood and other materials to recycling centers.

- Restore and reuse construction debris, such as, debris of historical significance, hardwood floors, old beams, mantles, rebar and old bricks.
- Create garden art from scrap metal for sale at the First Annual Garden Art and Plant Festival in early spring, at the central lawn by a new farmers market.

## **Recycle Toxins**

- The city should host a citizens hazardous materials recycling day to recycle toxins, such as, paint, antifreeze, batteries, oil, pesticides, fuels and other toxic substances and sell collected materials to recycling centers. Unsalable materials must be disposed of in a safe and legal manner, consult with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality.

## **Recycle Books**

- Book and magazine recycling could take place in a public building (e.g. your local library) to provide free reading material to children and other citizens.

## **Recycle Vegetative Debris**

- Create a business opportunity for the collecting and composting of organic material, and producing soil amendments and mixes for sale to home owners, the city, landscape companies.
- After establishing an opportunity for citizens to sell their yard debris the city should develop an ordinance requiring private property owners to keep their yards free of such debris, for the public's health, safety and welfare.

## **Plant Industry**

The following opportunities exist to create an industry around growing, using, and marketing of plant materials.

- Construct a plant nursery – which would entail producing container grown native trees, shrubs and perennials for restoration and landscaping. The production of herbs, vegetables and cut flowers can be produced for retail growers.

- Construct a distribution and production facility which will grow organic vegetables, herbs, and cut flowers. The facility will grow part of their produce and contract grow the other items with local residents, such as, the grandmother growing cut flowers in her front yard.
- Make available products that can be marketed to restaurants, hotels, casinos, and schools.
- Construct a farmers market as an outlet for businesses, the backyard grower and the craftsmen, such as, scrap metal artists.

## **Storm-water**

Storm water collection, storage, use, and discharge provides opportunities for the following:

- Flood control
- A diverse wildlife habitat
- Creation of a diverse visual environment
- Facilitation of higher property values
- Passive recreation, such as, bird watching
- Increased residential development
- Improved water quality
- Irrigation Usage
- Backup water sources for fire departments

The use of rain gardens, bio-swales and green parking lots reduce run-off and allow reductions in the size of storm water structures.

A storm water ordinance will be needed for new construction and renovations.

## **Native Plant Species**

Planting native species reduces the need for chemicals and water and decreases maintenance time providing a much more sustainable landscape.

## **Bio-fuels**

A new practice is the use of vegetation to generate energy for utilities for small public spaces, such as city hall. Small systems are available for this use. For more information:

[http://www.cleanenergystates.org/Publications/NREL\\_Biomass\\_Gasification\\_Mkt\\_Assessment\\_46190.pdf](http://www.cleanenergystates.org/Publications/NREL_Biomass_Gasification_Mkt_Assessment_46190.pdf)

## **Wind and Ice Resistant Plant Material**

Planting with storm resistant, native varieties of trees and shrubs have the added benefit of providing wind buffers to protect homes and reduce energy consumption. This practice also protects utilities and structures during storm events.

## **Low Landscape maintenance**

Using native varieties of grasses, shrubs, and trees and reducing grassed areas will decrease maintenance time and costs.

## **Greenways**

Greenways exist in every community in varying degrees. Most communities have town centers or floodway/riparian along streams and other water/drainage courses. It is important that each community identify these areas and use them to the greatest natural capacity as possible. Connecting greenways for multiple benefits such as wildlife habitat, storm-water management and recreation purposes increases the benefit to the community for a multitude of social, economic and environmental benefits.

## **Forest Canopy**

Target tree canopies for most communities should be around 40% of surface space. This will provide maximum benefits derived from shade, water, air, and many other resources.

## **Ordinance Development**

Sustainability plans should include a variety of policies in regard to storm-water management, land development, street and yard maintenance, tree ordinances and landscape ordinances, conservation easements, land use zoning for green areas, many other facets of green community development.

## **Local Citizen's Teams and Resources**

During this time of limited resources most communities find it necessary to rely on citizens to become a key part of the improvement strategy for their communities. After all, it's the citizen that truly benefit from the improvements. Organizing volunteer s in efforts to promote and implement sustainable community practices is key to a successful program.