

**Baltimore Commission on Sustainability  
March 2015 Meeting Report**

**Date:** Tuesday, March 17, 2015, from 6-8 pm

**Location:** 417 E. Fayette Street, Baltimore MD 21201

**Subject:** Commission on Sustainability September 2014 General Meeting

**In Attendance:** (*Commissioners*) –John Ciekot, Dana Cooper, Fran Flanigan, Earl Johnson, Sharon Middleton, Gerie Okwesa, Cindy Parker, John Quinn, Tom Stosur (*Staff*) – Beth Strommen, Alice Kennedy, Abby Cocke, Kristin Baja, Jenny Guillaume

Minutes – Approved, Ed motion, Dana second

**Staff Report**

- Greenscape will be late May. 51 grants awarded, 8 applying for Green School sttuas this year
- Peregrine falcon cam is up – Chesapeake Conservancy
- Financial Disclosure form
- Annual Report
- STAR initial rating is a 4

**Discussion:**

- Waste Working Group Update
  - Main recommendations are:
    - Peer to peer network
    - Anti-littering social marketing campaign
    - Increase support for Baltimore Green Schools program and youth work
    - Expand Municipal trash can pilot
    - Look at bag ban
    - Outreach to landlords
    - Permits
    - Monthly Code walks
  - Town Hall April = get a lot of people excited to help get Baltimore cleaner
  - Cindy comment – JHU NSF grant working with Patterson Park on litter and trash
- Legislative Items
  - Bag bill – heard comments that it is positive. Would be huge for Baltimore City if it passed
  - RPS – Senate Finance Committee work group and House committee vote this week
  - Community Solar – good shot possibly at passing. Still work to be done
  - Stormwater – administration to support with amendments, some things we like, some don't
- Growing Green – Lot by Lot
  - Jenny Guillaume GGI overview
    - City agency roles and NGO partners
    - **CITY AGENCIES**
    - Growing Green Work Group
    - Acquire lots through tax sale and foreclosure (HCD)
    - Use the Green Pattern Book in making decisions about re-using vacant land
    - Agreements / leases / MOU's
    - Refer applicants to NGOs
    - Participation in pilot projects

- Participation in community outreach and engagement
- Vacant Lot Maintenance
- Support Vacants to Value and GGi using designated Blight Elimination Funds
- **COMMUNITY GROUPS CDCs / FAITH BASED**
- Adopt vacant lots and create community-managed open spaces (gardens, etc)
- Monitor lots (311)
- Use Green Pattern Book for neighborhood scaled planning for vacant land reuse
- Participate in a pilot vacant lot maintenance program
- **NGOs**
- Provide technical assistance to groups greening vacant lots
- Provide assistance to groups wanting to adopt vacant lot
- Provide funding assistance
- Use the Green Pattern Book in making decisions about re-using vacant land
- Participate in GGi policy meetings to provide feedback and identify partner opportunities
- Adopt and care for vacant lots
- Assist with vacant lot maintenance
- Support Power In Dirt (Parks and People Foundation)
- **Baltimore Housing Land Resources Division**
  - Systemic Issues
    - Request was made to Dept. of General Services (DGS) usually via telephone
    - request vetted by checking location, ownership, occupancy type and responsible agency and whether they need water access
    - logged into Access
    - DGS prepares cover letter and adopt-a-lot license and sends to licensee for signature
    - Once the document was received, adopt-a-lot license is circulated for signatures
    - The part of the process that took the most amount of time
    - Was done by interagency mail; adopt-a-lot licenses sit around for too long
    - Signature requirements
    - goes to law department
    - back to DGS
    - out to licensee
    - Limited permission given
  - Solutions
    - Make the process electronic
    - Extend license terms
    - Expand permissions
    - Give gardeners access to water
  - **Water Access**
    - Partnered with Bureau of Water & Wastewater
    - Established fixed rate of \$120 for the garden season
    - Created a service request for installation of spigots in water vault
    - Convening appropriate agencies
    - Amending license language
    - Integration with data systems and website
    - Providing water

- Adopt A lot Online License Request Form Submission
- **Results**
  - In the 13 months leading up to 6/30/11 there were a total of 162 lots adopted
  - In FY 12, from the launch in August thru May 31st<sup>st</sup> – In 9 months there were **649** lots adopted
  - This reflects a **300.6%** increase in the number of properties adopted as a result of the initiative
  - In 2014, there were **1,046** lots adopted
  - Turnaround time has been reduced from 4-6 weeks to **TWO weeks**
- **Side Yard Program**
  - Allows sale of city-owned vacant lots to adjacent owner-occupants and non-owner occupants for a fixed price of \$500 per 1500 square feet
  - Allows sale of city-owned vacant lots to non-owner occupants for a fixed price of \$1,000 per 1500 square feet, respectively
- **DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING: ROLES**
  - **GGI Department of Planning Liaison**
    - Comprehensive Planning point person for GGI issues
    - GGI Working Group member
    - Attends all internal GGI meetings
  - **Comprehensive Planners and other staff**
    - Provide community based information
    - Identify lots
  - **GGI Coordinator**
    - Leads Inter-agency Working Group and GGI Maintenance Sub-working Group
    - Manage GGI Budget
    - Leverage resources for GGI projects
    - Point person for HCD for post demolition questions
    - Inform City agencies of greening projects
    - Fosters NGO and community relationships
  - **GGI Community Organizer**
    - **Parks & People Foundation**
      - Attend “in house” meetings prior to public meetings regarding demolition
      - If needed, attend community meetings regarding demo cluster post demolition greening projects
      - Promote use of Green Pattern Book
      - Organize around CMOS needed resources and support
      - Work with Comprehensive Planners in INSPIRE neighborhoods to help identify greening opportunities
  - Parks & People Foundation GGI Community Organizer
    - Community Managed Open Space element of the Growing Green Initiative is relatively small in acreage compared to other elements of the program, yet is critical for its role in stabilizing the social fabric of communities, increasing safety and improving public health.
    - Managing this role is also very time-consuming because communities need support envisioning improvements, locating volunteers and

preparing grant applications. This work is best done by non-governmental organizations.

- The Parks and People Foundation has been the most active and successful in this capacity, and they have a close working relationship with the City government assisting with the Power in Dirt program (PID).
- Parks & People Resources for Vacant Lot Improvement
  - Land Access
  - Training & Technical Assistance
  - In-kind and Financial Resources
  - Collaboration and Stakeholder Coordination
  - Project Design and Management
  - Volunteer Project Management
  - Landscape & Tree Services (social enterprise)
- **GROWING GREEN INITIATIVE PROJECTS**
  - **Temporary “Clean and Green” Projects**
    - ~75 %
    - Care A Lot Program
    - Vacant Lot Turf Study
    - Pop Up Art
    - Fencing
    - Urban Grazing
  - **Long Term Multi-layered Green Projects**
    - ~25%
    - Homegrown Baltimore Farms
    - Competition Sites
    - Stormwater Feasibility Studies
    - Sites like the 2400 block of Eager Street
    -
  - **Care A Lot – Community Upkeep Teams (CUT Grass)**
    - Keep small vacant lots clean and maintained
    - Promote community participation in vacant lot maintenance
    - Support existing small scale neighborhood maintenance efforts
  - **Vacant Lot Turf Study**
    - Study the effects of better soil preparation and amendments
    - Test different grass species – zoysiagrass, hard fescue, and clover
    - Align mowing and maintenance practices
    - All test and control sites are in the Oliver neighborhood
    - Working in partnership with the Civic Works Community Lot Team
  - **Baltimore Wildflower Project**
    - Professor Chris Swan is testing wildflower biodiversity on a series of Adopt A Lots in Harlem Park.
    - Anticipated environmental outcomes include:
      - reduced incidence of invasive weeds,
      - higher pollinator activity,
      - improved soil quality, and
      - added variety of flower color during the growing season.
  - **Pop Up Art Installations**
    - **Baltimore Office of Promotion and Arts Partnership**

- Fencing Treatments
- Hoophouse Design
- Large Scale Art, Site Specific
- Temporary Parklet Furniture
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- GGI Next Steps: Greening Network
- **Lot-by-Lot: Baltimore Strategies for Creating a New Urban Landscape through Vacant Lot Reuse**
- Miriam – the change in the adopt a lot process has been great. It is more accessible
- Gerie – Community garden applied in 2014 – can it be up to 5 years?
- Leanna – Town Hall Update
  - Commissioner will act as concierge
  - Attendees given a bag of “trash” and will have to go around room to properly dispose of it
  - Testimonials
  - The Hatcher Group will be organizing social media
  - Fun trash facts
  - Baltimore Trash Talk doing infographics
  - Help preparing
  - Encourage others to show

#### **Upcoming Events:**

- Next Commission on Sustainability Meeting: Tuesday, April 21<sup>st</sup> Town Hall, 2014, 6PM.