

Sustainability Council

2015 Annual Report

Department: Brookings City Clerk

Mission Statement: The City of Brookings is committed to becoming a leader among its peers in developing an environment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. For this council, sustainability shall mean stewardship of all our resources in such a way that we can maintain a quality place to live today and leave a legacy of enhancement for future generations.

Member

Holly Tilton Byrne, Chair	Benjamin Kleinjan, Vice Chair	Betty Beer
Norma Nusz Chandler	Robert McGrath	Mike Lockrem
Stephanie Aure	Alvaro Garcia	Nels Granholm
Jane Hegland	Paul Peterson	
Trish Jackson*		

* Resigned

In 2015, Ordinance 15-023 added a SDSU student member for one-year term.

Purpose

Membership:	12
Term:	3 years (student term - one year)
Residency:	Required for majority
Appointment:	January 1
Legal Reference:	Ordinance No. 04-11

The purpose of the Sustainability Council is to investigate, propose, educate, communicate and advocate investment strategies and policies that will improve our future quality of life while still meeting the needs of the present. The Council will serve as a sustainability resource to the community.

Objectives

Action: Investigate, prioritize, and facilitate activities that develop and encourage sustainable practices.

Education: Communicate the importance of sustainable activities to the Brookings community.

Advocacy: Propose to City Government and other organizations implementation of sustainable strategies, policies and activities.

Emphasis should include:

1. Green municipal practices and procedures
2. Green community wide practices
3. Future quality of life issues
4. Sustainable community planning and design including high performance buildings and landscapes
5. Incorporation of SDSU resources
6. Promoting economic growth through sustainable activities
7. Understanding economic impact and value creation of sustainability practices
8. Promote local food resourcing
9. Promote use of renewal resources

2015 INITIATIVES

Student Intern. The SDSU College of Education & Human Sciences provided a \$5,000 scholarship for a full-time summer intern for the Sustainability Council with the possibility of long term collaboration between the college and city.

Poverty/Affordable Housing Report. In 2014 the Brookings Sustainability Council developed *The Brookings Benchmarks Report* consisting of 56 sustainability “indicators.” Each fit under one or more of 11 Sustainability Principles of regional economy, community design, community knowledge, native plants and animals, smart energy, green building, reasonable mobility, clean water, smart resource use, healthy local food and healthy air. The indicators are intended to help Brookings to more clearly understand our record of sustainability and track success.

A regional economy indicator measured the percent of residents to be living in poverty was 22.4%. The benchmark report also cited 33% of homeowners and more than 50% of renters are living beyond their means. The Council determined additional information in the area of poverty and housing was needed to verify the data.

This summer an intern collected additional data from the U.S. Census Bureau and assistance programs throughout Brookings.

Heartland Regional Sustainability Coordinators Network. Thornes was invited to become a member of the regional affiliate of the Urban Sustainability Directors Network. The Heartland group consists of 23 members from six states. Membership with the Network is by invite only. The purpose of the Heartland network is to share information, experiences, and lessons learned in creating, implementing, and maintaining sustainability initiatives/programs within the organizations of various heartland communities and to collaborate on activities on common interest. The Heartland network is a member-driven organization that strives to support the work of local government sustainability staff in order to promote sustainability as a core element in the policies, programs, and projects of municipalities and county governments across the U.S.

Thornes participates in monthly conference calls and is on the planning committee to develop and organize the 2016 Regional Conference in Lincoln, NE on June 8-9-10.

Urban Agriculture. Thornes attended the Heartland USDN Regional Coordinators meeting in Lawrence, KS on September 16-18. Urban Ag (food production and processing within the city limits) was a major focus. Each participant reported on their community’s urban ag status, evaluated best practices, discussed the role of local government in advancing urban ag through policy improvements, providing technical assistance, and assisting with critical access to water. Each participant now required to develop an action plan for their local government and the results of all communities will be shared with USDN in order to advance the urban ag practice.

Thornes and the sustainability subcommittee have prepared an overview report on current urban ag practices in Brookings, potential challenges to implementation, and the city’s role in supporting local foods. A more thorough review of city zoning policies and ordinances is planned to identify barriers. Examples of initiatives under consideration include expansion of personal garden options, improved access to water, sale of local foods and products, zoning incentives for community gardens, neighborhood and collective gardens on private and city land, and incubator gardens.

Food trucks and mobile vendor permits were recently approved in the city and would qualify under the urban ag initiatives. Additionally, the Sustainability Council researched ordinances, prepared proposed amendments and drafted a pilot program identifying the process and drafting the forms for the urban chicken initiative.

Biking. The Sustainability Council discussed ways how it can support the City in moving forward in this effort. Representatives met with the City Manager and recommended a staff lead be identified and the bicycle advisory committee be assembled and meet.

Mike Lockrem was appointed to represent the Council on the Bike Advisory Committee. He also serves as the liaison between SDSU and the council.

The Council is encouraging local businesses to apply for Bicycle Friendly Business Designation.

Staff drafted a Charter and enabling ordinance for the Brookings Bicycle Advisory Committee (BBAC).

BBAC has met three times since it was formed in September and has initiated the following projects:

- Review of bike master plans from across the country
- Developing Bike Lane Standards and Definitions
- Created Public Education/Outreach Subcommittee (met once)
- Created Infrastructure Subcommittee (met 3x)
- Added high school voting member
- Created city facilities inventory of bike racks
- Created draft bike rack standards
- Finalizing “Biking” public education poster
- Evaluated and made recommendations on proposed bike rack art proposal idea

EVENTS & EDUCATION:

Dubuque Sustainability Conference. Thornes attended the Dubuque Conference and provided a detailed report on stormwater, alternative planting areas/zoning, bioswale, codifying sustainability, placemaking and smart growth initiatives.

Storm Water. The Council reviewed the Brookings Storm Water Management Program and provided the City Engineer with recommendations on how to promote storm water knowledge and awareness include the storm water art project, storm drain educational kit, reduced price rain barrels, tree keeper classes, active on Facebook and Twitter, informational booth at the annual home builders show and rain barrel making class.

A subcommittee was formed and developed a detailed recommendation of informational/educational materials, partners, funding and volunteer resources, kits, and promotional opportunities and met with the City Engineer to finalize a work plan.

Earth Day. The Sustainability Council provided and staffed an information booth at the 2015 Earth Day event held at the Brookings ReStore.

Mayor’s Big Sioux River Summit. Approximately 140 attended the Mayors’ Big Sioux River Water Summit was held on September 10. Mayor Reed gave a welcoming address and discussed

sustainability initiatives in Brookings. The Sustainability Council provided and staffed an informational booth.

Conservation District Survey. The Brookings County Conservation District sought feedback on priorities from various groups and individuals. They sent this survey to Mayor Reed and he asked that the Sustainability Council address it. The top 5 priorities identified were: 1) Inefficient Energy Use – equipment and facilities, 2) Inefficient Energy Use – farming/ranching practices and field operations, 3) Insufficient Water – inefficient moisture management, 4) Water Quality Degradation – excess nutrients in surface and ground waters, and 5) Water Quality Degradation – pesticides transported to surface and ground waters.

Poster/Ad Outreach Campaign. The Council currently has 11 educational posters. Distribution includes traditional posters, utility bill inserts, advertising in special issues of the Brookings Register, Facebook ads, website, and public access channel. New poster topics will include Clean Drinking Water, Storm Water, Bikes, and LEDs.

Green Drinks Presentation Planning. Wooden Legs has agreed to host a speaking and educational event called “Green Drinks.” The Council will give 10 minute presentations on sustainability issues with questions and answers. The talks will be held the last Thursday of the month, commencing January 2016.

Well Being Committee. The Sustainability Council met with the Well Being Committee that was established to promote child and family wellbeing. The Council provided input on their initiative.

Student Engagement. The Council recently added a student as a voting member to the Council.

Brookings Benchmarks Indicator Project. Members attended numerous speaking engagements to educate the public about the Project.

Developed “Changing Culture” Strategies.

- Benchmark document provided in annual and orientation meetings with department heads
- Subcommittee assigned to meet with newly elected city council members to provide overview of the benchmark document
- Subcommittee presenting benchmark document to the Brookings Municipal Utilities Board
- Subcommittee assigned to meet with newly appointed BMU board members to provide overview of benchmark document
- Developing orientation packet for new department heads and key staff.
- Meeting individually with department heads to discuss suggested sustainability practices specific to their departments
- Quarterly meetings with the full management team annually to highlight key sustainability issues and practices
- Submitting items for monthly employee newsletter
- Encouraging department heads and city employees to attend regional and local sustainability conferences and other educational opportunities
- Encouraging city staff to participate in sustainability practices webinars
- Emailing articles, reports, newsletters and other educational materials to department heads and key staff

Green Building Practices Policy. The Council researched and drafted a Green Buildings Practices Policy for the City.

Quarterly Meetings. The Sustainability Council established quarterly evening/extended planning meetings to identify strategies to implement items in the Action Plan.

Legislation. A subcommittee was designated as responsible for monitoring pending legislation and notifying the executive committee. Authorized executive committee the ability to draft and submit endorsement or position statements on behalf Council.

DRAFT GOALS FOR 2016:

- Education through Green Drinks monthly event, monthly *Brookings Register* column, poster and speaking engagements.
- Urban Ag/Local Foods - Conduct thorough review of zoning policies and ordinances pertaining to ag practices to identify barriers/challenges to implementation and recommend ordinance changes, if needed. Draft an action plan on urban ag initiatives. Recommend urban ag initiatives/pilot projects.
- Storm Water - Develop and implement public education campaign. Draft action plan on storm water initiatives (green roofs, permeable pavement, low-mow, rain collection/barrel systems, etc.). Budget for permeable pavement demonstration project at a city facility or street.
- Implement “Changing Culture” campaign:
 - Work with each department in identifying their sustainability goals for the year and list their achievements for previous year
 - Increase communication with Brookings Municipal Utilities
 - Pursue onsite sustainability training for city leaders and staff
 - Encourage staff to attend sustainability conferences and other training opportunities
 - Conduct sustainability “orientations” with new department heads and city officials
- Continue collaboration with SDSU College of Education & Human Sciences for the intern program.
- Green building design & practices - Draft policy statement, develop comprehensive plan and recommend sustainable building practices pilot projects.
- Inclusion of sustainability practices and principles into new Master Comp Plan:
 - Participate on Master Plan Steering Committee
 - Seek inclusive process and assistance from sustainability colleagues
 - Support Smart Growth (urban planning and transportation that promotes walkable and bikeable communities)
- Pursue endorsement of Wisconsin “codifying sustainability” program
- Actively seek grant sources for sustainability initiatives.
- Evaluate “Star” rating system; participate in pilot project for smaller cities
- Recycling containers in all city facilities.
- Support Bicycle Advisory Committee’s leisure and transportation biking initiatives.
- Recommend pilot projects to city staff and City Council