Environment Workgroup Notes from August 5 Kick Off Event

Elements of Sustainable Environment
- Address resource & development conflicts
- Leaving the environment better than you found it
- Keeping balance
- Respecting biodiversity
- Using resources wisely
- Being resourceful and using common sense like our grandparents did (i.e. reusing items, fixing something that is broken rather than throwing it away, aware of consumption)
- Making environmental/sustainable mindset a habitual way of thinking
- Mindful of connections between resources & consumption
- Environment (green space, parks, water) is accessible to all
- Using less
- Using natural processes
- Identifying and understanding the value in what we share
- Commonwealth (Texas as a state that invests power in its people and in the sense that sustainability should work for public good and well-being)
- Common ground
- Accommodate growth
- Will involve continued use of evaluation metrics over time
- Include processes and practices to improve value of environment
- Proceed with understanding that resources and money/funds are not limitless
- Include flexibility in approaches and regulation – some current regulations, standards, cultural practices prohibit sustainable environmental practices (i.e. natural lawns are not allowed by HOAs, we may need to provide guidelines for implementation of natural lawns)
- Aspire to net gain when measuring progress (net gains for environment, economy, etc)
- Willingness to examine and identify negative impacts of sustainable practices
- Need to share costs equitably
- Include discussion of obstacles
- Preserve & enhance natural beauty
- Careful not to export issues or damages
- Consider downstream impacts
- Encourage change and adaptation of cultural norms
- Ecosystem functions

Top Sustainable Environment Elements
- Resource management & replacement
- Preference for renewable resources
- Living within our means

- Wise use
- Adaptability
- Meeting (or exceeding) federal, state, local environmental standards
- Education will be fundamental
- Provide reasons for adoption of sustainable environment practices – including incentives, regulations

Challenges
- Identifying the group's and project's sphere of influence
- Individual property rights and encouraging/asking for change from individuals
- Work group's products/outcomes must provide viable policy
- Need to identify effective incentives
- Lack of City of Houston Comprehensive Plan
- Lack of transportation choice
- Identifying funds for projects
- Future need to live more locally – expect future trends toward localization
- Engaging with industry to identify holistic approach towards environment (also an Opportunity)
- Connections with other metro region in Texas and other states – how to plan for mitigating impacts on other places and how to account for connections

Opportunities
- Houston region has access to water and energy sources
- Many residents of the region have heard of and are interested in sustainability
- Ongoing activities and opportunity to engage in environmental impact analyses of growth of environment
- New development and growth bring opportunity, funds, and economic benefits for improvement (Houston region growth makes us different than Northeast where much of the sustainability efforts are retrofits or in the Midwest where population is declining)
- Chance to provide more specific environmental and sustainability education for students
- Using environmental services as tool for education
- Engaging with industry to identify holistic approach towards environment (also a Challenge)
- Opportunity to develop climate adaptation plan/chapter of the plan
- Can take a holistic view of existing regional plans
- Development plan needs to be affordable and accessible

Regional Plan for Sustainable Development
Environment Workgroup Notes from August 5 Kick Off Event

Scribe: Allison Carr

Regional Plan for Sustainable Development
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