



Local governments working together for a better metropolitan region

MEMORANDUM

October 1, 2008

District of Columbia

*Bladensburg**

Bowie

College Park

Frederick

Frederick County

Gaithersburg

Greenbelt

Montgomery County

Prince George's County

Rockville

Takoma Park

Alexandria

Arlington County

Fairfax

Fairfax County

Falls Church

Loudoun County

Manassas

Manassas Park

Prince William County

**Adjunct member*

TO: Board of Directors

FROM: Joan Kelsch, Chair *JK*
Intergovernmental Green Building Group

SUBJECT: GreenSPACE Learning Center Concept

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to introduce the GreenSPACE Learning Center concept and seek conceptual support for this initiative from the Board.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Board express support for the GreenSPACE concept. It is further recommended that COG's Intergovernmental Green Building Group (IGBG) work with GreenSPACE in defining a collaborative role in advancing green building capacity, advocacy, policy, and training among both local governments and the private sector in the region. The GreenSPACE concept is consistent with and supportive of COG's green building policy.

Background

In 2006, the COG Board sanctioned the Intergovernmental Green Building Group (IGBG) as a standing technical committee under the COG structure. The IGBG has continued to serve as a peer-to-peer exchange of local government professionals on green building issues. Over sixty percent of COG's membership have green building policies or programs underway. Nearly 500 projects are registered with the US Green Building Council for LEED certification in the region. Yet, there still remains a critical need to support capacity building and training in the area of green building. As part of its current work program, the IGBG is looking to develop standards for existing buildings, schools and residential properties. The IGBG has also identified the need for continuing training and better understanding of green building opportunities and techniques for integrating policy to support local and private sector environmental and sustainability practices.

Need for Learning A Center

Based on the discussions and continuing dialogue of IGBG members, there is a need for a regional one-stop-shop learning center. Green building is essential to meeting the challenge of climate change and reducing energy use. As noted, over sixty percent of COG members have or are considering various green building policies and programs (see attached matrix).

Over the past year, several jurisdictions in the region have enacted new laws and green, high-performance building standards that will impact the daily work of many building professionals. As the growing number of training sessions and informational forums in the region suggests, more education and training is needed to prepare both government staff and building professionals for the transitioning to a green economy. Building and development

professionals and public officials must seek guidance and training to meet the demands of new requirements for green building practices including energy efficiency, storm water management, and more. While this need has been met in the past with decentralized and individual efforts, there is an increasing need to have a centralized source for skills, tools, products, and best practice applications.

GreenSPACE Learning Center Concept Defined

GreenSPACE is a joint effort by the Enterprise Community Partners and GreenHOME, both active participants in IGBG. GreenSPACE is envisioned as a regional learning center, meeting place, and one-stop-shop for green building professionals, policy makers, and the public. GreenSPACE is expected to catalyze green development in our region. GreenSPACE's trainings, technical assistance, demonstrations, speakers, and resources will show developers, designers, engineers and contractors how to make green practices work for their projects and will help governments implement green development policies that reap rewards for the community, the economy, and the environment. Similar green building learning centers have been very successful in Boston, Chicago, Atlanta, and several cities in California.

The GreenSPACE initiative offers an excellent opportunity to leverage partnership opportunities through the existing regional network of green partners. IGBG is in an excellent position to leverage the expertise in partnership with GreenSPACE and resources of building professionals, governments, environmental groups, trade associations, economic development organizations, and funders to lead the region toward green development.

The GreenSPACE business plan calls for a broad range of partners to ensure its success. Potential funding sources include: foundation grants, corporate philanthropy and sponsorships, and government contributions. An advisory committee will soon be formed to provide guidance to identify key partners and accelerate fundraising.

Finally, we have the opportunity to integrate affordability into the discussion of green building as a means to achieving sustainability for all. With an emphasis on the fundamentals of green design and development, GreenSPACE will help practitioners find cost-effective opportunities for greening their projects.

In summary, IGBG believes that the one-stop learning center augmented with existing green building efforts in the region should be supported by COG and local governments. IGBG will continue to refine this relationship with GreenSPACE and provide updates to the Board, as necessary.

Thank you very much for considering this request. If you have any questions, please contact me at 703-228-3599 or email at JKelsch@arlingtonva.us or the COG staff contact George Nichols at 202-962-3355 or gnichols@mwkog.org.