COMMUNITY-WIDE SUSTAINABILITY

“A vision of Normal as a community that stewards all resources responsibly, so that our Town can continue to thrive and grow for generations to come.”

DEAR COMMUNITY MEMBERS,

We are fortunate to be a part of a community that cares for our needs in the present and also carefully considers needs for the future. As we carefully examined current needs and future goals it became clear that the combined vision for Normal could be summed up with one complex idea: Community-Wide Sustainability.

Community-Wide Sustainability is a vision of Normal as a community that stewards all resources responsibly so that our Town can continue to thrive and grow for generations to come. Activities that fall under the sustainability category all focus upon critical components of social progress, economic vitality and environmental stewardship. Our attention is focused, not merely on green initiatives, but on all aspects that will directly impact quality of life for our residents.

Together with the Town of Normal Sustainability Task Force and over 100 community partners, we will champion the many projects necessary to promote and foster a healthy future for residents. Our work is not to be achieved individually, but to be embraced collectively as an investment in our future.

Our future depends upon Community-Wide Sustainability. We welcome you to learn more, get involved and become a part of positive planning for future success.

Yours Truly,

Chris Koos
Town of Normal Mayor
To achieve a Sustainable Normal, current practices and future plans must unite. While sustainability can’t be measured in a single dimension, we can categorize practices and plans into three critical categories: environmental stewardship, economic vitality and social progress.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP
Green is not just a look, it’s a functional process whereby we responsibly and appropriately plan and manage resources such as air, water and energy for the benefit of our community.

ECONOMIC VITALITY
Communities that comprehensively focus on sustainability and livability are more competitive when attempting to attract and retain businesses and their employees.

SOCIAL PROGRESS
High quality human services and opportunities for spiritual growth are an essential tenet of sustainable living. Our vision is one that works to improve the quality of life for all individuals in our community.
A SUCCESSFUL HISTORY OF SUSTAINABILITY

Local initiatives promoting what we call “sustainability” today are as old as Normal itself. Founder Jesse Fell’s vision of Normal was one of “an ‘intellectual city on a hill’ characterized by lovingly tended trees … wrapped around a campus of higher learning.” Other pioneering projects have included citizens saving and reusing materials during World Wars I and II and the start of recycling at Illinois State University as early as 1968. In 1970, the creation of Operation Recycle, a community-wide recycling not-for-profit, led to the Town’s funding of the Ecology Action Center (EAC) in the early 1990s and its eventual installation of the center in the landmark Edwin C. Hewett House on College Avenue. The citizens and leadership of the Town of Normal have always embraced conservation-oriented efforts that pave the way toward a sustainable future.

The Town Council formalized its commitment to sustainability in 2001 with its approval of the sweeping Uptown Redevelopment Plan that has positioned the Town as a national leader in sustainable planning and development. Today, the Uptown Plan is largely complete and the area now offers:

• LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) buildings, including the beautifully efficient Children’s Discovery Museum.
• Pedestrian and bicycle-friendly walkways, including the popular, tree-lined Constitution Trail.
• An eco-circle whose water-loving plantings and gently running water collect and naturally filter storm water, keeping urban pollutants out of local streams.
• A state-of-the-art, LEED Silver “Uptown Station” (multimodal transportation center) to enhance the region’s transportation network and to embrace transportation alternatives.

Aspects of the Uptown Plan have garnered much attention and won prestigious national awards. Normal has gained prominence as the first city in the United States to require private developers to build to LEED standards. The Uptown Plan as a whole has achieved LEED ND Silver Designation, which indicates that the project is sustainable when measured against a diverse set of guidelines, from building green-ness and livability to site sustainability.

Normal appreciates and works closely with local organizations and institutions; the spirit of collaboration is alive and well. This is evidenced by our goal of becoming an “EVTown,” a model electric vehicle community that offers the information and infrastructure necessary for community members to seek out alternative modes of transportation. The positive impact of all this effort will be felt for generations but there is much more work to be done.
Get involved.
www.normal.org
IDENTIFIED THREATS

While Community-Wide Sustainability spans many diverse areas, four areas of potential vulnerability have been identified: air, energy, human services and water. Each area warrants immediate action in order to protect our current quality of life and position ourselves for a healthy future.

AIR
Surprisingly, the air quality rating is below the national average. While Normal has received a pass thus far based on size and current air quality in relation to federal standards, improvements are needed as the United States Environmental Protection Agency works to make the standards stricter. The populations most impacted by air quality issues are small children, the elderly and anyone with respiratory issues. Air quality must become a priority to comply with upcoming legislation and to protect those at risk.

ENERGY
Energy shortages are known threats to quality of life. Our community’s engagement with energy drives Normal’s ability to sustain itself now and in the future. With planning and immediate action around energy generation and energy use, Normal will work to meet current energy needs without compromising the needs of future generations.

HUMAN SERVICES
High quality human services are an essential tenet of sustainable living. While the current services and support system is characterized by generosity and responsiveness to community, it is at risk due to the recent State budget crisis. Organized collaboration and support is needed to meet the needs of our current population. In addition, Normal must make plans today for our rapidly aging population.

WATER
Our actions today will determine whether or not there is a viable, long-term water supply that is adequate in quality and quantity for our growing community. Normal needs to plan for a future of more limited water availability, and work today to ensure that the quality of water is protected from pollutants.
SUSTAINING NORMAL

In order to embrace sustainability as a community value, one that we must work on collectively, we have set specific goals within different categories. A 28-member Sustainability Task Force, consisting of 13 diverse work groups and 111 individuals, worked to document our community’s strengths and to identify areas needing continuous review.

This work falls within the following categories:

ARTS & CULTURE
Goals include work to:
• Extend federal and state “Percent for Art” programs to the Town level.
• Re-fund the Harmon Arts Program.
• Lay the groundwork for a publicly funded art school (grades 6-12).

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Goals include work to:
• Facilitate sustainable and green company expansion and initiatives.
• Promote regional products and services.
• Educate and train a green workforce.
• Encourage green innovation.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING & COMMUNITY BUILDING
Goals include work to:
• Create a Community Education Clearinghouse.
• Translate sustainability materials into non-English languages.
• Publicize the “greening” of the Normal area.
• Promote individual and family sustainability initiatives.
• Ensure that Town departments continue to become greener.
• Promote green education programs on local radio.
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
Goals include work to:
• Foster positive communication and collaboration among educational institutions.
• Solicit the involvement of area youth.
• Explore mutually-beneficial, sustainable initiatives between educational and governmental agencies.

FOOD SYSTEMS
Goals include work to:
• Conduct an analysis of the current food system.
• Create action steps to address gaps and weaknesses identified.
• Provide information on and assistance with potential funding sources.
• Develop a local food innovation center.
• Make local, sustainably produced foods available; offer education as to its impact.
• Expand the number of community gardens available in food-insecure neighborhoods.

ENERGY IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT/ENERGY GENERATION
Goals include work to:
• Encourage distributed energy generation in both residential and commercial applications.
• Promote existing energy conservation and performance programs.
• Establish the Town as a model organization related to energy use and generation; promote policies and practices.
• Encourage energy efficient design and operation of overall development and buildings.
GOVERNMENT PLANNING AND PUBLIC SAFETY AND SERVICES

Goals include work to:
• Publicize the UNITY Community Center’s existence, successes and needs.
• Explore opportunities to reduce waste and expand recycling efforts.
• Organize to make the most of the Town’s volunteerism.
• Promote strong Town of Normal-Unit 5 relations.
• Formalize the Town’s support for culture and the arts.
• Support continued promotion of alternative transportation and innovation.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Goals include work to:
• Develop and coordinate health and wellness services and programs with local stakeholders.
• Offer community health and wellness education.

HUMAN SERVICES & SPIRITUALITY

Goals include work to:
• Replicate and extend Town initiatives that provide targeted support for at-risk populations.
• Encourage citizens to offer time and service through education.
• Advocate for improved funding of human services.
• Prepare to provide a funding safety net when State funds fall short.
• Stabilize and improve conventional health care services available to the under and uninsured.
RESOURCES & CARBON MANAGEMENT: AIR
Goals include work to:
• Partner with the City of Bloomington, McLean County, Illinois State University and State Farm Insurance to establish an intergovernmental carbon reduction plan.
• Take initiatives to reduce dependence upon automobile transportation.

RESOURCES & CARBON MANAGEMENT: LAND
Goals include work to:
• Improve the physical framework and facilities in Normal.
• Reduce sprawl and promote incentives for infill development.
• Strengthen efforts to foster community-wide environmental stewardship.
• Promote green and recreational space and the creation of wildlife habitat zones.
• Promote soil and yard preservation along with sustainable lawn care, maintenance and landscaping.
• Improve transportation networks in the community.
• Survey citizens to identify opinions, preferences, challenges and opportunities in relation to land use and management.

RESOURCES & CARBON MANAGEMENT: WATER
Goals include work to:
• Maintain a sustainable supply of high quality public water.
• Prioritize water conservation efforts.
• Prevent and manage water pollution via enhanced water treatment and storm water management.
• Establish sustainability documentation and public archive for current and future benefit.

TRANSPORTATION
Goals include work to:
• Strengthen pedestrian and bicycle transportation.
• Offer high-quality, high-impact alternatives to intra-community travel.
• Promote availability of regional transit options.
• Maximize rail for movement of goods.
• View trucking as a support to rail for movement of goods.
• Request sustainability plans from prospective transportation-oriented businesses.
• Gather more information about the role transportation businesses can/will have in the Town’s economy.
Working to protect our current quality of life and to position our community towards a healthy future.
SUSTAINING NORMAL

To kick-start progress, priority actions or “Quick Starts” were developed within each of the critical sustainability categories of environment, economy and society. On the list of Quick Starts is activity that addresses a current threat, will have a high level of impact and makes the most of momentum already underway. Examples include encouraging energy and water conservation, promoting low-carbon transportation alternatives, establishing a Sustainable Business Council and creating emergency response options for human service agencies in need.

The Plan calls for action, collaboration and partnership. We must work strategically for our future progress. We welcome you to learn more and get involved.

SUCCESS WILL COME ABOUT WITH:

- Community Engagement
- Collaboration Across Community
- Cross Generational Involvement
- Economic Development
- Local Awareness

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