

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AGENDA

WAKE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

Prepared By

Wake County Sustainability Task Force

May 2011

*DRAFT
(Sustainability Task Force Review Copy)*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

List of County Commissioners

List of Task Force Members

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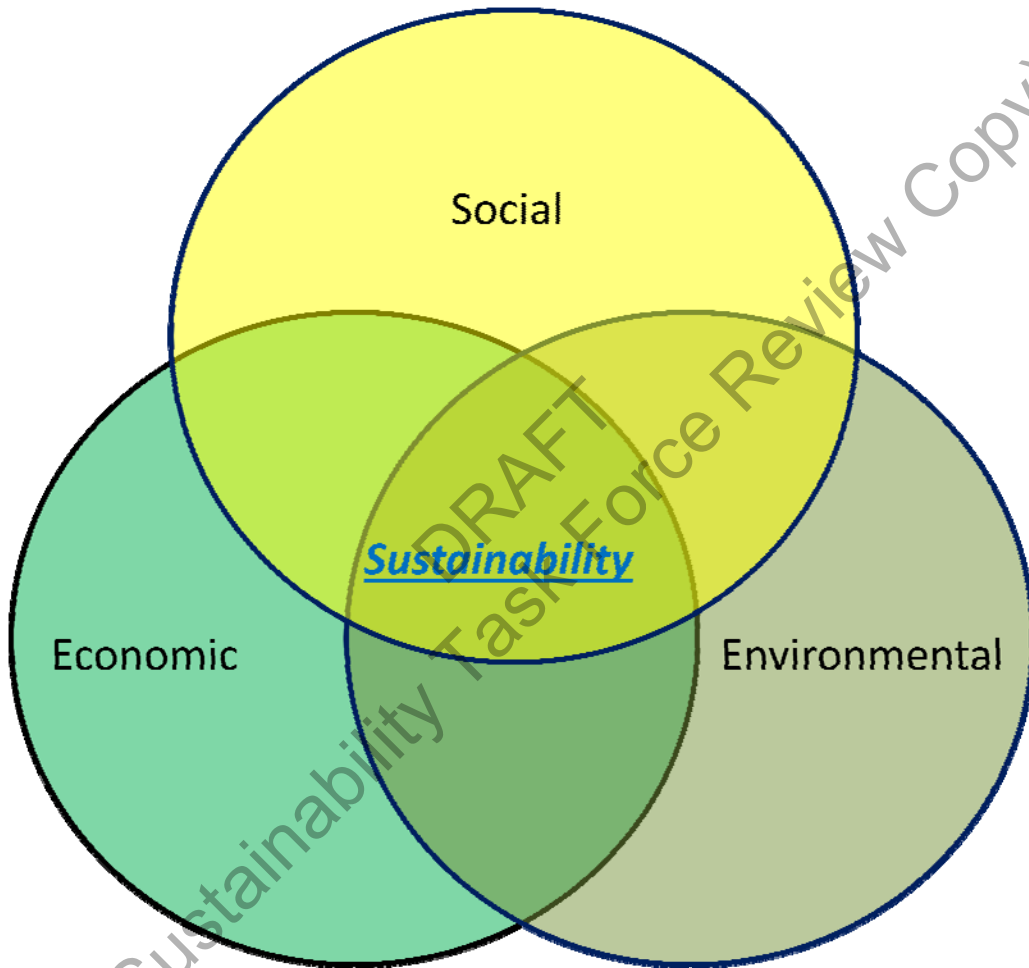
List of County Staff

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Definition: "Sustainability"

<Insert STF definition for sustainability>

Wake County Sustainability Task Force, January 2011



1.0 Introduction

Since the early 1990's Wake County has continuously been recognized nationally and internationally as one of America's *best places* to live, work, learn, and play. This recognition has fueled population growth in the County at a rate of approximately 85 persons per day for the past 10 years – one of the fastest growth rates for large urban counties in the nation. While we acknowledge the need to continue attracting creative people and innovative companies to Wake County, we also understand that our economic prosperity and natural resources are inextricably linked, and that to sustain our *best place* status we cannot pursue one at the expense of the other.

1.1. The “Greening” of Business

In recent years organizations such as Forbes and Newsweek have started to publish new studies that rank the environmental impacts of companies. In response, many companies have taken to calculating and reporting their *carbon footprints* and *green house gas emissions* and implementing *green programs* and *sustainability initiatives*. Consequently, monitoring and reporting factors such as air emissions, water use, waste disposal, energy consumption, and other environmental indicators has become the norm for an increasing number of companies. **Table 1-1** presents Newsweek's Top 10 Green Rankings for U.S. companies as published in August 2010.

As rankings such as those presented in **Table 1-1** continue to emerge and evolve, market forces and competition will make it increasingly necessary for companies to be viewed (*scored, ranked, etc.*) as good environmental stewards. As the competition for *green rankings* increases, it is expected that *green* companies will be attracted to those locations that have community leaders, programs, policies, and infrastructure systems in place that are consistent with and support a *green* corporate culture. For the green companies, it is anticipated that the quality of the local environment will matter and they will take notice of the health and condition of the local waterways, the landscapes, and the air.

Table 1-1
Green Rankings: US Companies ⁽¹⁾
(*Newsweek, August 2010*)

Rank	Company Name	Sector	Green Score ⁽²⁾
1	Dell	Technology	100.00
2	Hewlett Packard	Technology	99.32
3	IBM	Technology	99.20
4	Johnson & Johnson	Pharmaceuticals	99.02
5	Intel	Technology	97.57
6	Sprint Nextel	Technology	94.98
7	Adobe Systems	Technology	94.15
8	Applied Materials	Technology	92.67
9	Yahoo!	Technology	92.67
10	Nike	Consumer Products, Cars	92.66

Notes:

- Green Scores were calculated for the 500 largest publicly traded companies in the U.S. Company size was evaluated according to revenue, market capitalization, and number of employees.
- Green Score is derived from three component scores: the Environmental Impact Score (EIS), the Green Policies Score (GPS), and the Reputation Survey Score (RSS), weighted at 45 percent, 45 percent, and 10 percent, respectively.

1.2. The Rise of the “Creative Class”

In his best-selling 2002 publication, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, Richard Florida predicts that creative individuals will be the primary fuel source for economic growth and development in the 21st century. In his vision of the future, a *creative class* will emerge and it will not be motivated by the conventional need to climb the corporate ladder, but rather by the need to create new ideas and new technologies that have global applications to solve complex problems in complex societies. As shown in **Table 1-2**, the Research Triangle Park (RTP) Region was ranked No. 5 in the nation using Florida’s Creativity Index factors.

Florida’s research suggests several important factors for community leaders in Wake County to consider in planning for the future:

1. Successful communities of the future will be defined by their ability to attract and retain creative talent;
2. The creative class will be attracted to those communities that provide a quality of life that cultivates creativity, investigation, discovery, and invention;
3. The creative class will place a high value on outdoor recreation and activities such as bicycling, jogging, kayaking, and trail running.

Table 1-2
National Creativity Index Rankings
(Richard Florida, 2003)

Creativity Index Rank	Region	Technology Rank	Talent Rank	Tolerance Rank
1	Austin, TX	1	3	7
2	San Francisco, CA	3	5	6
3	Seattle, WA	6	6	1
4	Boston, MA	12	4	3
5	Raleigh-Durham (RTP)	2	2	20
6	Portland, OR	4	19	2
7	Minneapolis, MN	16	9	4
8	Washington-Baltimore	15	1	16
9	Sacramento, CA	5	11	17
10	Denver, CO	22	8	8

For the creative class, it is anticipated that the quality of the local environment will matter and they will take notice of the health and condition of the local waterways, the landscapes, and the air.

1.3. Planning for a Successful Future

In the future, as in the past, companies will relocate to places where talent is located. If the author of the *Creative Class* is correct and the new Forbes and Newsweek publications accurately reflect coming changes in corporate culture, then it is vital that Wake County sustain its standing as a creative and innovative community – one that is attractive to the innovative companies that will foster the new *green* corporate culture and one that is attractive to the *creative class* that will drive economic development.

Fortunately, the community leadership and vision required to establish and sustain Wake County as a relocation destination of choice for creative people and innovative companies has a strong tradition in Wake County. Many of the policies, programs, and facilities that have allowed Wake County to sustain a *best place* status for an extended period of time – while welcoming 85

new residents per day for the past 10 years – started as community-based initiatives that were commissioned by locally-elected leaders many years ago. Such programs include, but are not limited to, open space and greenway development, water conservation, water reclamation and reuse, and improved stormwater management. Moving forward, a continued proactive approach to environmental stewardship and sustainability will be vital to ensuring Wake County's standing as a *best place* place for creative people and innovative companies.

1.3.1. Environmental Stewardship Agenda

On April 1, 2002, the Wake County Board of Commissioners adopted Wake County's first Environmental Stewardship Agenda (ESA). The purpose of the ESA was to identify environmental stewardship initiatives, programs and policies that can contribute to sustaining Wake County's reputation as a desirable place to live, work, learn, and play. As the social, economic, and environmental conditions have changed in the County, the ESA has been updated to remain responsive to the needs of the community. Since April 2002, the ESA has been updated by Wake County staff and adopted by the Board of Commissioners on two occasions: September 15, 2003, and February 21, 2005.

1.3.2. Sustainability Task Force

In April 2009, the Wake County Board of Commissioners identified three major goals for the year. One of the goals was to update and enhance the County's ESA to incorporate strategies for sustainability and green initiatives. To update the ESA, the Board of Commissioners established a citizen task force (*Sustainability Task Force*) with representatives of diverse interests and perspectives to evaluate current environmental stewardship strategies and to recommend changes and new strategies. The Board of Commissioners directed the Sustainability Task Force to focus on three critical areas:

1. Water Resources Conservation and Management
2. Solid Waste Reduction and Management
3. Energy Conservation and Management

The membership for the Sustainability Task Force was established in December 2009, and the Sustainability Task Force convened for its first meeting in January 2010. The objectives of the Sustainability Task Force were to (a) develop recommendations that are environmentally and financially sustainable for each of the three focus areas, and (b) develop performance measures by which the County, and the community as a whole, can measure progress toward the achievement of sustainability targets in the areas of water, waste, and energy.

1.4. Definition of Sustainability

There are a number of different definitions for *sustainability* offered by private, public, and not-for-profit entities, and the definition may change depending on the subject. For example, environmental sustainability may be different from economic sustainability and social sustainability. Following are typical dictionary definitions for sustainability and its root words:

Sustain – to hold up, to keep up, to prolong, to maintain, to keep in existence, to provide the conditions in which something can happen or exist.

Sustainable – A process, state, or condition that can endure or is able to be maintained for long periods of time.

Sustainability – the capacity to maintain a certain process, state or condition indefinitely.

For the purposes of the Sustainability Task Force, *sustainability* is defined as . . .

<insert STF definition for “sustainability”>.

The overall goal of the Sustainability Task Force has been to develop recommended strategies that balance the community’s need for continued economic prosperity with the need to preserve and protect our natural resources as the County marches toward the next population milestone of 1.5 million residents.

1.5. Current Community Profile

Wake County is one of the top 10 fastest growing counties in the country, and growth projections forecast this trend to continue. Located in the heart of North Carolina's Piedmont region, Wake County is home to the State Capital of North Carolina and it consists of a total surface area of approximately 860 square miles across two river basins: the Neuse and the Cape Fear. The County has approximately 919,938 residents, and there are 13 independent units of local government (12 municipalities and the County). These attributes, and those listed below, make Wake County the largest and most diverse county in the State of North Carolina.

Population – Wake County’s population grew from about 300,000 in 1980 to over 900,000 currently, and is projected to reach 1.5 million in 2035.

Migration – About 30% of the growth is naturally occurring (due to live births), and 70% is due to people moving to the County. The top sources for migration:

- a) Within North Carolina, most residents come from Durham County, followed by Johnston and Mecklenburg counties;
- b) From other states, most come from New York, followed by California and Virginia; and
- c) From outside the United States, most come from Mexico, followed by India and China.

Wake County Population Estimates	
1980	301,429
2010	913,918
2035	1,544,631

Age – Wake County residents are younger than the average State resident and U.S. citizen, with a median age of 34.6, compared with 37 in N.C. and 36.9 in the U.S.

Labor Force – The number of jobs has increased by 170% from 1980 – 2008, from about 172,000 to 464,000. About 418,400 Wake County residents were employed in April 2010 – 92% of the County’s labor force.

Education – On the whole, Wake County’s populace is highly educated; 47.8% of the population over 25-years of age is college graduates, significantly higher than the nation and the State.

Housing - The number of housing units has increased by 211% from 1980 – 2008, from about 113,440 to 353,235. The County’s median housing value is \$238,119 compared to about \$150,829 (in 2008 dollars) in 1980. The County’s average household size decreased slightly – from 2.66 persons/per household (pph) in 1980 to 2.62 pph in 2008.

College Graduates, 1980 – 2008			
Percentage of Population 25 years or Older			
Year	U.S.	State	Wake
1980	16.2	13.2	26.6
2008	27.7	26.1	47.8

Income – Per capita income has jumped 59% since 1980, to \$33,820, and median household income has increased 18% in that time, to \$65,180.

Vehicles – The number of registered vehicles in Wake County has leaped 227% since 1980, from about 226,000 to the current level of nearly 740,000.

Per Capita Income, 1980 – 2008			
Year	U.S.	State	Wake
1980	\$20,160	\$16,887	\$21,293
2008	\$27,589	\$25,215	\$33,820
Change	37%	49%	59%
Note: Amounts are in 2008 dollars			

Students – The number of students in Wake County Public School System has grown 157%, from about 54,400 in 1980 to over 140,000 now.

1.6. Summary

The accolades that Wake County has earned since the early 1990’s did not occur by chance, but have resulted from the unique partnerships forged among the community’s diverse leaders in the areas of business, natural resource protection, education, infrastructure systems, and local government. Without question, one of the reasons Wake County has been able to sustain its status as one of America’s *best places* is because the community’s leaders recognize the importance of working together – *allowing all interests and perspectives to participate in the discussion* – to develop and implement important initiatives that balance economic prosperity, quality of life, and natural resource protection.

Recognizing that the condition of our natural resources and the strength of our economy are linked, the Sustainability Task Force has developed recommendations for water, energy, and waste that are environmentally and financially sustainable. In addition – *and equally important* – the Sustainability Task Force has developed performance measures by which the community can measure progress toward the achievement of the sustainability targets established for each selected area.

The recommendations presented in this document, and the associated performance metrics, will be submitted to the Wake County Board of Commissioners as the 2011 Wake County Environmental Stewardship Agenda. As in the past, as the social, economic, and environmental conditions change in the County, the Environmental Stewardship Agenda will be updated to remain responsive to the changing needs of the community and to retain Wake County’s standing as a *best place* for creative people and innovative companies.