



TOWN OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND



GREEN INITIATIVES IN TOWN OPERATIONS

November 2009

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Purpose of Report

This report describes the Town of Hilton Head Island's efforts to further support efforts to be a Green Community, defined herein as a community which strives for:

- ❁ Resilient community, including well maintained infrastructure and buildings, sustainable operations, purchasing & reuse, and sustainable facilities;
- ❁ Reduced environmental impacts, including solid waste reduction & reduced carbon footprint;
- ❁ Increased connection to nature;
- ❁ Integrated design process, including site design and building construction;
- ❁ Reduced resource consumption, including energy, fuel, water and land; and
- ❁ High quality of life.

Town Council Vision, Goals & Policies

The Town's Vision, Goals and Targets for Action have many similarities to a Green Community Philosophy which results in a high quality of life for its residents and visitors.

The Town of Hilton Head Island's Vision

“World Class Residential and Resort Community” means:

- ❖ *Great Natural Beauty*
- ❖ *World-Class Beach*
- ❖ *Pristine Waterways*
- ❖ *Preserving our Low Country Character and Heritage*
- ❖ *Well-Planned Community*
- ❖ *Sustainable Community through Continuous Revitalization*
- ❖ *Vibrant Community*
- ❖ *Exceptional Recreational Opportunities for All*
- ❖ *Community Welcomes All*
- ❖ *Hilton Head Island: Community Spirit and Pride*

Town Council has adopted 5-Year Goals that are highly indicative of a Green Community Philosophy:

- ❁ Sustainable Town—Preserving Our Character
- ❁ Unique Amenities for Residents and Guests
- ❁ Top Quality Services, Financially-Sound Town
- ❁ Effective Regional Transportation System
- ❁ Clean, Safe, Accessible Waterways
- ❁ Strengthen Community Spirit and Pride

Two specific 2009 Policy Targets for Action related to a Green Community focus on:

- ❁ *Recycling Program and Direction*, specifically the private waste hauler companies' ability to do town-wide recycling; and
- ❁ *“Green” Initiatives in Town Operations*, specifically focusing on social, economic and environmental concerns in daily operations.

These 2009 efforts will be discuss later in this report.

Background of Efforts

It must be noted that Hilton Head Island became a Green Community long before ‘going green’ was the latest buzzword. In fact, the Town incorporated in 1983 because the citizens did not like the development being allowed by the County on such an environmentally sensitive barrier island. Development of the Island in the early 1970’s stemmed from efforts to create Planned Unit Developments that preserved natural features (trees, waterways, wetlands, wildlife areas, open space), and this technique has been used as a model nationwide. Early achievements by the Town that coincide with a Green Community were:

Resilient community (including well maintained infrastructure and buildings, sustainable operations, purchasing & reuse, and sustainable facilities):

- ❁ Adoption of a Comprehensive Plan 11 years before it was mandated by the State.
- ❁ Adoption of a Municipal Code.
- ❁ Adoption of Disaster Recovery Plan.
- ❁ Adoption of Flood Hazard Plan.
- ❁ Adoption of Storm Water Management Program.
- ❁ Adoption of 10 Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
- ❁ Adoption of varied funding sources for Town Operations and CIP program including real estate transfer fee and beach preservation fee.
- ❁ Creation of an Emergency Operations Plan.
- ❁ Participation in the Community Rating System Program.
- ❁ Establishment of a joint effort with the local power company for a Power Line Burial Program.

Reduced environmental impacts (including solid waste reduction & reduced carbon footprint):

- ✿ Promotion of Xeriscape gardening for water conservation.
- ✿ Establishment of a Water Quality Monitoring Program, including prohibition of storm water directly into the ocean.
- ✿ Use of native plant material in landscaping to avoid the over use of pesticides and fertilizers.
- ✿ Beach fence program to preserve the dunes system.
- ✿ Bi-annual Hazardous Waste Round-up Program.
- ✿ Recycling in every Town building, beach parks, and on the beach.
- ✿ Joint efforts with Public Service Districts for conversion from septic tanks to sewer lines.
- ✿ Creation of internal Town Hall Intranet site to reduce printing of shared hardcopy information.
- ✿ Creation of external Town Internet site to reduce trips and hardcopy printing.
- ✿ Adopted nationally-known tree protection/preservation ordinance in the Land Management Ordinance, including mandatory tree replacement.

Increased connection to nature:

- ✿ Adoption of a Beach Management Plan.
- ✿ Adoption of Broad Creek Management Plan.
- ✿ Adoption of Dune and Dune System & critical area protection to Land Management Ordinance.
- ✿ Adoption of beach and wetlands protection to Land Management Ordinance.
- ✿ Adoption of a beach ordinance to restrict lighting on the beach for sea turtle protection.
- ✿ Creation of a Land Acquisition Program to preserve open space, natural resources & vistas.
- ✿ Construction of 22 Public Parks.

Integrated design process (including site design and building construction):

- ✿ Adoption of a strict Land Management Ordinance with tree protection; wetlands protection; site design standards (buffers, setbacks, pervious areas and materials, open space standards, etc.); beach and dune protection; storm water standards; zoning districts; PUD standards; building and sign design standards; and floodplain regulations. This ordinance became a model to several other towns across the nation for its environmental protection and land use regulations.
- ✿ Prohibition of heavy industry on the Island.
- ✿ Adoption of International Building Codes (including Base Flood Elevation) and Energy Conservation Code.
- ✿ Designing and constructing award-winning water retention and filtration systems into our CIP projects.

Reduced resource consumption (including energy, fuel, water and land):

- ✿ Construction of over 55 miles of public pathways that increases walkability, bicycling, and recreation between sites.
- ✿ Installation of Traffic Signal Timing System.
- ✿ Switching to Energy Efficient LED Traffic and exit signs.
- ✿ Using LED lights when possible, including in traffic signals.
- ✿ The Town has very few street or intersection lights to maintain a low energy, starlit environment.
- ✿ Purchase of hybrid vehicles when feasible.
- ✿ Use of reclaimed water for irrigation on golf courses and some public landscaping.
- ✿ The Town is a member of Palmetto Electric's Green Power Program, whereby all revenue from Green Power premiums will be reinvested in future development of additional renewable resources or facilities.

High quality of life:

- ✿ Because of these early efforts, Hilton Head Island is well known as a premiere retirement and resort community, jumping from a few thousand residents in the 1970's to its current population of around 35,000, with over 2.1 million visitors per year.

2009 Efforts

Two efforts were established to partially fulfill the 2009 Town Council Targets for Action. One effort focused on increasing recycling efforts by the public and the other on internal Town Hall operations.

Island-wide Recycling & Collection Program

This effort involves discussions with local waste hauler companies on the feasibility of a town-wide recycling pick-up program.

Status:

Staff held interviews with all the waste haulers and discussed primarily the option of requiring all haulers to charge their customers for recycling whether or not the customer participated in recycling. Town Council has directed staff to draft a Request for Proposals (RFP) to assess the feasibility of designating two or more collection zones for the Island and within those zones to franchise recycling and waste services for all single family residences. Responses to these RFPs should be due by end of December 2009 and a determination can be made by Council as to better direction for the program.

The proposed cart system program which would accompany the franchise agreement would allow the haulers to set their charges for a base (64 gallon) cart which they would supply to all customers. Each customer would also be provided with bins for their recycling material. This coupled with a significant increase in

cost for a 96 gallon cart would, hopefully, create enough of a disincentive for people to minimize waste and increase recycling. This proposed cart system is similar to a pay-as-you-throw (PAYT) program but in a conventional PAYT program the largest cost to haulers is disposal, which makes it easier to increase fees to residents the more they throw away and less they recycle. In the case of Hilton Head Island, Beaufort County pays the disposal fee for all haulers. Thus a conventional PAYT in Hilton Head Island may not create enough of a cost difference to be a disincentive for people to decrease volume of waste.

Based on staff research and comments from the hauler interviews, it became clear that education is essential for a recycling program to be successful. A comprehensive education program needs to be developed by the selected haulers for their customers. Additionally, staff's recommendation would not change the availability of the current Beaufort County Convenience Center near the airport.

Town Operations for Going Green

A Staff Committee made up of representatives from each department was created to determine actions that can be taken by Staff to expand a recycling and product use reduction program at Town Facilities; to inform Town employees of environmentally friendly products; and to encourage efforts in reduction of use and cost for energy sources and water at Town facilities and in Capital Improvement Program projects.

Status:

The Town Operations Program consists of four specific areas of concentration:

- ***Reduced Resource Consumption:*** Reduction of use and costs of paper, manila envelopes, and other office supplies.
- ***Reduced Resource Consumption:*** Reduction of use and costs for energy, fuel and water.
- ***Reduced Environmental Impacts:*** Increase departmental participation in recycling and use of Green products.
- ***Reduced Environmental Impacts:*** Provision for alternative means of educating public and staff instead of with hardcopy printed materials.

Reduced Resource Consumption: Reduce use and costs of paper, manila envelopes, and other office supplies.

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CURRENT ACTIONS:

- Better use of the Town's Internet site via more public information being posted such as board agendas.
- Departments are moving all policies, interim policies, and informational bulletins to electronic format and placed on Town's Internet site.
- Some small permit applications are accepted on line.

- Some hardcopy items are being sent to departments via email instead of hardcopy.
- Boards receive re-usable vinyl packet holders instead of manila envelopes to reduce envelope usage and cost.
- Initiated use of Laserfiche to replace Microfilming of records for permanent retention.

PROPOSED DEPARTMENT ACTION:

- Human Resources and Finance will accept emailed versions of internal forms/letters with electronic signatures.
- Community Development and Revenue Collections will use email in corresponding to applicants whenever possible instead of hardcopy.
- All Board Coordinators will convert packet materials as adobe pdf and send electronically to board members and staff and for Internet posting, if so desired by board members.

PROPOSED ORGANIZATION ACTION:

- All departments will:
 - Send internal memos/letters via email instead of hardcopy as much as possible.
 - Print in duplex, especially drafts.
 - Only print the materials and emails that are absolutely necessary. These can be saved to the computer if needed.
 - Utilize the Intranet site to house items that could be viewed instead of providing hard copies to staff.
 - Determine what forms can be sent and paid for electronically.

Reduced Resource Consumption: Reduced use and costs for energy, fuel and water

CURRENT ACTIONS:

- Light bulbs are being replaced with energy saving bulbs.

PROPOSED DEPARTMENT ACTION:

- Facilities Management will purchase products for all Town facilities with energy savings in mind (Ex: light bulbs; Energy Star appliances; water saving valves, toilets, sink faucets; low flow fixtures; waterless urinals; automatic shut off coffee makers, etc.)
- Facilities Management will investigate other technologies to further reduce energy & water consumption at Town facilities.

- Community Development, Administrative Services and Facilities Management will utilize energy saving products and eco-friendly materials in any future design, renovation or construction of Town facilities to ‘build green.’ This could have cost implications that might not be feasible and would need assessed.

PROPOSED ORGANIZATION ACTION:

All departments will:

- Establish a “power save” mode at specified timeframes for your monitor. This will temporarily shut down the monitor but keep your computer ‘live’.
- Adjust heat/air Friday p.m. & Monday a.m. to use less electric during weekends. During the week, set thermostats at reasonable temperatures that work efficiently with each other. Minimum/maximum setting should be established to avoid mold.
- Put in all contracts with vendors to use/install energy saving devices when possible and as budget allows.
- All drivers will use proper tire pressures and engine idling to conserve fuel.
- Use blackle.com instead of google.com for a search engine to conserve energy with a black computer background.

Reduce Environmental Impacts: Increase departmental participation in recycling and use of Green products

CURRENT ACTIONS:

- Items that Town facilities are currently recycling are:
 - Mixed paper: Cardboard, office paper, magazines, phone books, catalogues
 - Plastic marked with a 1 or 2
 - Aluminum or steel cans
 - Batteries
 - Newspapers
 - Printer cartridges/computer equipment/phones
- Individual recycling bins have been placed in offices as requested, with larger collection bins in kitchens.
- A recycling bin has been placed in Council Chambers for collection of materials by the public or the boards.
- Fire & Rescue has been collecting the same materials as Town facilities plus fluorescent light bulbs, hazardous materials solvents, paints, etc.
- Fire & Rescue has collected over 300,000 lbs of household hazardous materials from the community over the past 4 years and 12,000 lbs of electronic waste in bi-annual Hazardous Waste Round-Up Program.

- Bottled water that is purchased for emergency management purposes is distributed throughout the departments to use before expiration and then the bottles are recycled.
- Certain vehicles are being replaced with more energy efficient vehicles.
- Fire & Rescue has replaced their pumper fleet with pumpers that are more fuel efficient, require fewer oil changes, emit 90% less particulates and 60% less green house gasses, and have primers that are oil-less so that no oil is expelled on the ground.
- Fire apparatus fleet has alcohol resistant foam that is environmentally friendly.
- Fire & Rescue has replaced cleaning supplies with environmentally responsible items and has only purchased biodegradable paper cups in the last 18 months.

PROPOSED DEPARTMENT ACTION:

- Facilities Management should evaluate recycling at beach parks, recreation parks and special events.
- Facilities Management will replace cleaning supplies with environmentally friendly supplies.
- Facilities Management will no longer purchase Styrofoam cups for drinking. Insular eco-friendly hot cups with thermal insulation are too expensive, so ceramic mugs will be purchased instead. Extra or unused coffee cups can also be donated by staff for department use.

PROPOSED ORGANIZATION ACTION:

All departments will:

- Read newspapers on line instead of purchasing them, if possible.
- Print business cards on recycled paper to show that the Town is conscious of recycling efforts and eliminate business cards for positions that do not necessarily require them.
- Switch over to 100% recycled paper for the copy machines when it becomes more affordable.

Reduce Environmental Impacts: Provide alternative means of educating public and staff instead of with hardcopy printed materials

CURRENT ACTIONS:

- Recycling tips have been posted in the Kitchen and on Intranet.
- Community Development is including Go Green information in their quarterly newsletter & the Intranet.
- A designated staff member is sending out Quarterly Tips in emails to staff.

PROPOSED ORGANIZATION ACTION:

All departments will:

- Put all brochures on Internet & stop printing hardcopy when possible.

Future Efforts

- *Natural Resources Division:* Investigate and encourage a Town-wide Recycling program, especially on site construction debris.
- *Natural Resources Division:* Monitor efforts by Sustainable Sites Initiative, to develop a “green” rating system for site design that promotes techniques which enhance ecosystem services, such as air and storm water filtration, providing habitats and detoxifying pollutants.
- *Development Review & Zoning Division:* Rewrite the Land Management Ordinance for better flexibility in redevelopment and to promote a sustainable community, including incentives (e.g., open space credit for green roofs, mixed developments, etc.).
- *Comprehensive Planning Division:* Research potential for participation in the LEED green Building Rating System Program, or similar system.
- *Inspections/Compliance Division:* Research Green Building Programs (including using ‘green’ materials and low maintenance building systems) and amend the code, if necessary.
- *Inspections/Compliance Division:* Coordinate with Homebuilders Association on Green Building programs and public education.
- *Inspections/Compliance Division:* Evaluate Town’s Energy Conservation Code for possible amendments.
- *Urban Design Division:* Determine code changes necessary to allow solar panels/wind turbine/green roofs, other alternative energy/green sources, and water conservation that affect building & site design, and incorporate into the LMO (e.g., water harvesting, rain gardens, etc.)
- *Facilities Management Division:* Determine energy efficiency for all Town facilities with energy audits, full conversion to CF bulbs, water conservation, storm water capture and reuse, increased shading for town buildings and parking lots, etc.

Green Development Incentives

Many tools and other advantages are already in place, giving incentives to developers or companies to settle on Hilton Head Island.

- The Town incorporated with Green Community Philosophy long before it was the latest buzzword, combining well planned communities, nature, open space and recreation. Many of our ordinances have been used nationwide.
- With the Town’s creative financial funding program, property taxes are low compared to many places in the United States.
- The climate of the Island is temperate allowing energy bills to be low.
- The Town has some of the lowest development and building permit fees in the region and state.

- ❁ Town Staff has an expedited development review process and a quick turn-around time for building plan reviews.
- ❁ The Town has some select over-the-counter permitting.
- ❁ Town Inspectors have an average 24 hour turn-around time for inspections.
- ❁ The Town owns over 1150 acres of land for open space, preservation, recreation & redevelopment.
- ❁ The Hilton Head Island Airport has both general aviation and passenger transportation, with the larger Savannah International Airport 30 miles away.
- ❁ Interstate-95 lies 20 miles away with a mostly 4 lane road (US 278) connecting the Island with the Interstate.
- ❁ The Town has been highly recognized in many different magazines as one of the top tourist destinations in the nation, with over 2.1 million visitors per year.
- ❁ Around 12 miles of pristine beach is a major draw to the tourists. The beach is periodically renourished to maintain its stability.
- ❁ The Heritage Golf Tournament is another major draw for golfing enthusiasts each spring.
- ❁ The Town has large annual special events and many smaller festivals each month (Concours d'Elegance, Wine & Food Fest, Chocolate Fest, Rib Kick-off, etc.)
- ❁ The community has a high sense of volunteerism with many civic and non-profit groups such as Rotary, Volunteers in Medicine, Humane Society, etc.