

Mount Rainier Green Team Year in Review 2014 Accomplishments and Activities

Summary

The Mount Rainier Green Team was formally established in 2012 as a network of community members interested in environmental issues and charged with drafting and implementing the City's sustainability plan. The Green Team has monthly meetings to advance the City's existing sustainability plan and to plan future sustainability projects. We work collaboratively with City staff and multiple partners and organized our Work Plan in 2014 around six central goals:

- Reducing Solid Waste;
- Reducing the City's Carbon Footprint;
- Promoting Green Infrastructure;
- Enhancing and Expanding Local Habitat and Biodiversity;
- Expanding the Community Based Food System; and
- Enhancing Collaborations, Partnerships and Networks.

The goals in our 2014 Work Plan (Appendix I) build upon recommendations from the Green Infrastructure Master Plan, Bicycle Master Plan and City Sustainability Plan.

In 2014 the Mount Rainier Green Team implemented projects to position Mount Rainier for the future. This included seeking grant funding for bicycle infrastructure and partnering on green infrastructure improvements such as the Buchanan Green Street. The Green Team membership played a significant role in drafting key City plans that were finalized in 2014, including the City's Green Infrastructure Plan and Bicycle Master Plan. The Team provided recommendations to City Council on development projects, solid waste reduction and organized workshops and education and outreach events around composting, stormwater and the County's Rain Check Rebate Program. The Green Team co-hosted meetings with the Tree Commission on Pepco's vegetation management policies and participated in discussions with the County on the Allison Street Levee Project. The Green Team was successful in acquiring additional capacity from the University of Maryland for two projects: 1) to organize information for a sustainability tab for the City website and 2) to conduct a municipal carbon footprint analysis in 2015.

Please see the descriptions below for more detailed information on Green Team activities.

Specific Actions by Goal

Reduce Solid Waste

Increase City Household Recycling (Ongoing)

Household recycling is an ongoing interest for the Team. We believe there is much room for improvement in household recycling - from encouraging households to start recycling to increasing the amount of recycling per household through education and outreach and bigger and easier to use bins. Prince George's County has a 60 percent recycling goal by 2020. In 2014 a member of the Green Team began analysis of the cost to purchase larger recycling bins for the City residents. This draft proposal is being circulated for comment and we are seeking information from neighboring towns that have increased the size of their bins; College Park, Bowie. In early 2015 we plan to present this information to the City Council for consideration in budget planning for 2016 and beyond.

Increase Backyard Composting – Support City goal of 225 homes by 2015 (Ongoing)

In 2014 the Green Team presented to the City Council a cost benefit analysis on the benefits of purchasing additional backyard compost bins for Mount Rainier residents at a subsidized price. The City Council concurred and purchased 60 additional bins for residents. This action supports the City's goal to increase backyard composting in Mount Rainier thereby reducing solid waste tipping fees. In Spring of 2015 the Team plans to implement an outreach and communications campaign to get the remaining bins to residents.

Education and Outreach on Composting

In 2014 the Mount Rainier Green Team featured a composting education table at the Nature Center's Spring Greening Fair on April 19, 2014. In addition, the Mount Rainier Tool Shed hosted a composting demonstration on April 26, 2014. These events provided information to residents on how and why to compost and how to get a bin from the City DPW.

Reduce the City of Mt. Rainier's Carbon Footprint

Enhance and Promote Multi-modal Transportation Safety and Infrastructure with City and County

- **Bicycle Master Plan.** The Mayor and Council voted to adopt the Mount Rainier Bicycle Master Plan in 2014 (January 7th, 2014, Resolution 3-2014). The plan was written by a Green Team member and recognizes the importance non-motorized transportation plays in contributing to greenhouse gas reductions and resiliency of the community. The Bicycle Master Plan has been used to inform bicycle investments in the city. A state grant was used to install 100 new bicycle parking racks throughout the City in coordination with the plan, generating 326 bike parking spaces.
- **Arundel Green Street.** In 2014 the Green Team recommended that the Council support a design that maximizes stormwater capture and enhances bike and pedestrian safety

for the Arundel Green Street project. The Green Team recommendation stated that “...any mitigation project should strive for the maximum environmental benefit to offset the loss. Prince George’s County plans for a green street on Arundel Road may achieve this mitigation if the project works for the maximum stormwater capture, maximum tree replacement and improved safety for pedestrians and cyclists.”

Pursue Grants to Support Bike Infrastructure & Safety

A Green Team member wrote a grant for the FY15 Maryland Bikeways Program requesting \$40,000 to improve safety on Mount Rainier’s streets, as well as improve connectivity with the existing bike network in Washington, DC (immediately contiguous) as well as with the Anacostia Tributary Trails (the directly adjacent Northwest Branch Trail). The City submitted the grant in 2014 but it was unsuccessful.

Encourage LEED Certification (Green Design) in the Private and Public Sector Development Projects in the City

- **Rhode Island Ave Developments.** The Green Team advocated for the 3300 Block Development and the 3200 Block Development for Rhode Island Avenue be aggressive in its green building design goals. At City Council meetings with the County Redevelopment Authority and with StreetSense, Green Team members requested that the developers strive to meet LEED Gold or higher standards. Members asked the Council to consider all its past plans, ordinances and resolutions stating the City supports green buildings and our Sustainable Maryland Certification.
- **Civic Center.** In 2014 the Green Team met with architects of the Civic Center project. In that meeting members recommended more aggressive stormwater mitigation and design elements be incorporated into the plans.
- **Perry Street Net Zero Townhomes.** In 2014 the Green Team wrote a letter of support for the Perry Street Net Zero Townhomes Project for funding from Gateway CDC. The letter emphasized the project’s alignment with the City’s Green Infrastructure Plan and other stated goals. The project serves as a regionally-significant example of low-impact development that will encompass solar PV, high efficiency systems, and comprehensive on-site stormwater mitigation efforts including cisterns, green roofs, pervious materials and conservation landscaping.

Create Energy and Environment Corner for The Message

In the November edition of The Message, the *Green and Healthy Living* section was created. The Green Team submitted stories on the Rain Check Rebate Workshop and the University of Maryland projects.

Create City Website Tab on the Green Team, Sustainability, etc.

In the fall of 2014, the Mount Rainier Green Team partnered with students at the University of Maryland in the Integrated Life Sciences program to provide capacity in upgrading the City's website on different sustainability initiatives: waste reduction, energy, transportation, local food and water quality. The students are helping to compile and organize information about what the City has done and what citizens can do to embrace sustainable practices. The website is still a work in progress but an upgrade is planned in the spring of 2015.

Carbon Footprint Analysis

In 2014 the Mount Rainier submitted a proposal to Sustainable Maryland Certified for University of Maryland students to conduct a municipal carbon footprint for the City. Mount Rainier was selected and early next year, the Mount Rainier Green Team will work with Environmental Science & Technology program students. The deliverable would be a final report that calculates Mount Rainier's carbon footprint and provides recommendations to reduce the City's carbon emissions. In 1999, the city of Mount Rainier became one of the first cities in the region to develop a climate action plan. Since then a lot has changed with both the efforts Mount Rainier has undertaken to reduce its carbon footprint and the technical tools available for conducting such estimates. An updated assessment is necessary for Mount Rainier to continue to be a green leader among municipalities in Maryland, and to help the city reduce its carbon footprint on the planet.

DOE Climate Action Champions Application

In 2014 the White House launched the Climate Action Champions competition, to identify and recognize local climate leaders and to provide targeted Federal support to help those communities further raise their ambitions. Mount Rainier Green Team members contributed to the submission to the Department of Energy (DOE). However, Mount Rainier was not chosen as one of the 16 communities from around the country as the first cohort of Climate Action Champions.

Promote Green Infrastructure Projects

Work with Tree Commission to Educate and Advocate for City's Urban Trees

- On July 8, the Green Team convened a meeting with the Tree Commission and Pepco officials, Tami Watkins (Public Relations), Marty Lieb and Dan Landry (Pepco Foresters) at City Hall. Pepco provided a presentation on the rule governing the new vegetation management policies and its procedures. Green Team and Tree Commission members asked numerous questions concerning mature tree designations, wildlife impacts, replacements and vouchers.

- In the wake of the Pepco removals in Mount Rainier, the Green Team co-hosted a meeting with the Tree Commission on December 4, 2014. Green Teams and Tree Commissioners from other municipalities in Maryland were invited. The purpose of the meeting was to share experiences and brainstorm ideas about how we can lessen the impact of Pepco vegetation removal and pruning in the future.
- An ongoing concern for the Green Team is the planned work on the Allison Street Flood Protection System Certification Project. The Green Team has been instrumental in working with the City on lessening the environmental impact of tree removals and recommending design components for the Arundel Green Street. In November the Green Team and Tree Commission sent a letter to Director Ortiz requesting responses to requests for information concerning tree removal requirements.

Promote PG County Rain Check Rebate Program

In September close to 30 people participated from Mount Rainier and surrounding communities in a stormwater audit and workshop coordinated by the Mount Rainier Green Team. The first-ever hands-on audit was led by officials from the Prince George's Department of the Environment's (DoE) Rain Check Rebate program. The workshop focused on what homeowners can do to manage stormwater on their properties and how the County can help. The County's rebate program seeks to clean up stormwater through three key principles: slowing it down, spreading it out, and soaking it in. The Green Team has been promoting this program through articles in The Message and posts to the listserve.

Finalize & Implement the Mount Rainier Green Infrastructure Plan

On January 7th the City Council adopted the Mount Rainier Green Infrastructure Plan via Resolution 3-2014. The Green Team worked with the Low Impact Development Center on the plan to ensure the plan accurately represented the City's green efforts and continues to push the bar on stormwater management. The Plan presents a set of tools to be utilized when selecting and implementing projects to improve and reduce urban stormwater runoff. The plan signals Mount Rainier's continued commitment to collaboration and leadership on the environment.

Seek grant funds and partnerships to reduce impervious cover and increase green infrastructure activities

In 2014 the City of Mount Rainier was awarded \$242,500 for the Buchanan Green Street Project. The Green Team is a project partner and provided a letter of support for the grant. The project aligns with the City's Green Infrastructure Plan and goals. The Buchanan Green Street project is designed to reduce stormwater flows into the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River, promote groundwater infiltration, expand the tree canopy and native plantings, and

enhance bicyclist accessibility and safety. The site experiences regular flooding and standing water due to inadequate drainage and engineering of the current street.

Enhance and Expand Local Habitat and Biodiversity

Promote residential plantings through seed swaps and native plant sales

The Mount Rainier Tool Shed volunteers hosted a popular annual free event on April 26, 2014. The Plant and Seed Swap included a class on composting, a planting workshop for children and a native plant sale by Chesapeake Natives.

Support Community Garden in installing pollinator garden

The Community Garden in 2014 planted pollinator friendly plants and flowers around the garden.

Continue to Expand Community-Based Food System

- The Community Garden is off and running and is now separate from the Green Team in function. In its second year of operation the Garden hosted 25 gardeners. The garden continues to engage the community through talks and workshops around topics such as building cold frames for winter gardening and Climate Change and Vegetable Gardening. In addition the garden offers space to a local youth community group.
- In 2014 a Mount Rainier Green Team member continued to host a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Drop-Spot for Earth Spring Farms in Carlisle, PA. Around 20 members participated in 2014.

Enhance Partnerships, Collaborations & Networks

Collaborate with Mt. Rainier Nature Center staff on Environmental Programming

In 2014 the Green Team participated in the Nature Center's Spring Greening Fair in April. In addition, the Green Team partnered with the Nature Center on the Rain Check Rebate Workshop in September and worked with Nature Center staff and students in a cleanup of the Rain Garden in May.

Collaborations and Networks

- **Prince George's Green Team Summit.** Mount Rainier participated in the first Prince George's County Sustainable Maryland Summit. Four members of the team and Assistant City Manager Veronica Owens attended. The Green Team met and shared successes and challenges with neighboring Green Teams.

- The Mount Rainier Green Team invited other Green Teams to the Community Tree Meeting on December 4 on Pepco's vegetation management practices. Brentwood Green Team members participated.

Other Items of Note

The Green Team wrote a letter of support to the City Council to pass a resolution in support of a recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed Clean Water Act rulemaking. The EPA/Corps proposed rule would clarify the definition of Waters of the United States to ensure that streams, wetlands and other water bodies which influence larger downstream water bodies are protected by the Clean Water Act. This is important because currently many streams and wetlands are vulnerable to pollution and destruction due to confusing policies put in place by the prior administration. The Council passed Resolution 13-2014 on November 5, 2014.

Appendix I. 2014 Work Plan

Vision

The Mount Rainier Green Team works to create a healthy and sustainable city for our residents, and thereby serve as a model for how a small city can achieve sustainable outcomes through community participation. Our group works to leverage the energy and leadership of our residents to decrease our environmental footprint and create a more livable future for the community and planet.

1. **GOAL: Reduce Solid Waste (Natural Resources)**

- Increase City household recycling
 - Set City goal for recycling
 - Develop recycling education information for City residents
 - Research and develop recommendation for City to purchase larger recycling bins
- Increase backyard composting – support City goal of 225 homes by 2015
 - Develop recommendation and cost/benefit analysis for City Council on why to continue to subsidize backyard bins for residents (complete)
 - Launch composting social marketing campaign
 - Educate residents during events (e.g. Spring Greening Fair)
- Support county and state-wide legislation concerning waste reduction such as plastic bag fees

2. **GOAL: Reduce the City of Mt. Rainier's Carbon Footprint (Energy/Climate)**

- Enhance and promote multi-modal transportation safety and infrastructure with City and County
 - Finalize bike master plan and begin implementation of plan components
 - Monitor and advocate for bike/pedestrian infrastructure and safety in Arundel Green Street
 - Encourage lower-speed traffic, pedestrian infrastructure and public space where possible in new developments and city spaces, as well as retrofitting existing streets and other spaces in the City (e.g. raised intersection at 34th & Bunker Hill)
 - Pursue grants to support bike infrastructure & safety
- Create a policy against idling of all city-owned vehicles
- Advocate for city to purchase hybrids and other alternative fuel vehicles in the City fleet
 - Explore grants to support such as Maryland Smart Energy Communities Grant
- Encourage LEED certification in the private and public sector development projects in the City (e.g. Civic Center, StreetSense, PG Dev't Authority)
- Promote residential energy efficiency
 - Create residential green certification program for Mt. Rainier
 - Promote use of corn stoves and membership in the local corn cooperative
- Create energy and environment corner for The Message
- Create City website tab on the Green Team, composting, recycling, etc.

3. GOAL: Promote Green Infrastructure Projects (Watershed Stewardship, Climate Resilience)

- Work with tree commission to educate and advocate for City's urban trees
- Promote the acquisition of new green space or enhanced green space via grant support and partnerships
- Work with MNCPPC on increasing green infrastructure/bioretenion on properties in Mt. Rainier
- Promote PG County Rain Check Rebate Program
- Finalize & implement the Mt Rainier Green Infrastructure Plan
 - Seek grant funds and partnerships to reduce impervious cover and increase green infrastructure activities (as opportunities arise)

4. GOAL: Enhance and Expand Local Habitat and Biodiversity (Natural Resources/Land Use)

- Promote residential plantings through seed swaps and native plant sales (Mt Rainier Tool Shed)
- Support Community Garden in installing pollinator garden
- Install pollinator gardens on City and MNCPPC properties
 - Support via grant funding

5. GOAL: Continue to Expand Community-Based Food System

- Expand community garden and host educational speakers and events
- Host seed swap

6. GOAL: Enhance Partnerships, Collaborations & Networks

- Collaborate with Mt. Rainier Nature Center staff on environmental programming
 - Spring and fall rain garden cleanup
 - Spring Greening Fair
- Organize annual meeting with MNCPPC on City parks and maintenance, enhancements, bioretention potential, supporting pollinators, etc
- Participate in Maryland Multi-City Environmental Boards and Commissions meetings
- Participate in Zero Prince George's
- Participate in Sustainable Maryland Communities forums
- Build relationships with neighboring Green Teams through speakers and events