



# 2022-2023

## SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

May 2022-April 2023

SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Office of Planning

May 17, 2023



## Purpose of Annual Report:

- It's called for in the City Code, 2-150.63:  
  
*(D) ...The Commission shall hold, at a minimum, one public meeting in April, May, or June each year to review its accomplishments and ideas during that fiscal year and preceding years, and shall present a summary of its events and accomplishments to the City Council each year in June or July. At the public meeting, members of the community shall be permitted to speak about and showcase issues pertaining to sustainability during a public comment period.*
- It's an opportunity to increase information-sharing between staff, administration, boards, commissions and City Council.
- Allows for anticipation of upcoming issues and priorities, in order to prepare and budget, if necessary

## Creation:

Division 14 of Article III Boards and Commission Generally of Chapter 2 Administration of the City's Code of Ordinances.

## Membership:

The Sustainability Commission shall consist of five (5) voting members appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the City Council, who shall serve three (3) year terms.

| Membership        |                           |                      |
|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Commissioner      | Original Appointment Date | Current Term Expires |
| Nathan Inks       | September 1, 2020         | June 30, 2024        |
| Mark Graf         | July 21, 2020             | June 30, 2023        |
| Jonathan Matthews | July 21, 2020             | June 30, 2023        |
| Mike Tabbert      | November 3, 2021          | June 30, 2025        |
| Kelley Skillin    | July 20, 2022             | June 30, 2025        |
|                   |                           |                      |
|                   |                           |                      |
| Chris McLeod      |                           | Former Liaison       |
| Ryan Fox          |                           | Liaison              |
| Alexis Richards   |                           | Liaison              |

## Purpose:

Pursuant to its City Charter authority to establish advisory boards and commissions, the City Council has determined that establishing a sustainability commission for the following purposes will serve and support the city's sustainability responsibilities and be beneficial for the City of Sterling Heights:



- (1) To advise and make recommendations to the City Council and City Manager on the city's long-range goals, policies, and programs on all matters pertaining to sustainability, including matters referred to the Commission for study as well as matters initiated by the Commission of its own accord;
- (2) To develop and advise the City Council on implementation of community-wide strategies regarding waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable growth and development;
- (3) To create a model of sustainability through efforts to advocate, educate, and promote the social, economic, and environmental health of the community, now and into the future;
- (4) To develop and implement public recognition programs promoting individual property and neighborhood level sustainability projects;
- (5) To develop educational materials and/or public campaigns regarding litter reduction, recycling, and sustainable yard and property enhancements;
- (6) To work in collaboration with city staff, officials, and existing city nonprofit partners to determine annual city and community priorities, projects, and resources relative to sustainability issues that improve the environment, save the city money, or reduce the city's carbon footprint;
- (7) To assist city staff with the engagement of the city's residents and businesses in sustainability initiatives;
- (8) To broaden the lens and scope of energy and environmental needs in the future such as wind, solar, clean air, water, and improving infrastructure;
- (9) To study and propose climate action planning, reduction of municipal energy consumption, increasing alternative energy use, and encouraging residential cultural change to embrace individual actions to help the city attain its long-term sustainability goals;
- (10) To recognize natural resources as chief assets of the city and encourage responsible stewardship of these assets;
- (11) To collaborate with state, county, and local officials, businesses, community organizations, developers, residents, educational agencies, and experts to complete studies, develop educational programs, establish volunteer programs, and identify grants;
- (12) To research initiatives outside of the city to determine how other communities are addressing sustainability;
- (13) To review the city's current plans and policies, and assist with planning, implementation, community engagement, goal setting, and progress monitoring;
- (14) To provide access for comment and input from residents and businesses in the city;
- (15) To offer recommendations for policy updates and revisions;
- (16) To educate and inform residents and facilitate sustainable practices that enable smart choices for the city and its residents which lead to a reduction of the city's carbon footprint while promoting, through education, outreach, and awareness efforts, the conservation of energy,



- (17) To prioritize sustainability policies;
- (18) To create a Sustainability Plan by the end of its first year of existence, and thereafter update and maintain a three-year sustainability plan that outlines specific areas for City Council to study and the Commission's recommendations relating to those areas; and
- (19) To advise the City Council on any other issues and best practices related to sustainability as deemed appropriate by the Commission

### Challenges in 2022/2023:

By far the biggest problem the Sustainability Commission faced this year was transitioning from a new commission that was focused on large scale goals and initiatives into a commission that could focus on the implementation of specific projects. The Sustainability Commission set out to create internal tracking documents in order to track progress on implementation of the fifteen priority action items set forth in the Sustainability Plan. Once the Commission completed this sorting, they made structural changes in order to make their work efficient. The Commission created three Committees, and has passed a resolution requesting an expansion of Commission that will be presented to City Council.



## Meetings

| May 2022  |   |   |       |  |
|---|---|---|-------|--|
| 1   | Agenda Item   | 1 | Title | Review of Tree Preservation Ordinance  |
|   | The Sustainability Commission continued to review the draft of the Tree Preservation Ordinance with Ms. Albright of the City Attorney's Office. A number of topics were provided to the City Attorney's Office to research. |   |       |  |
|   |   |   |       | Action: Consideration postponed to the June 2022 meeting.                                |
| The Sustainability Commission is briefed on several ongoing projects, including: Michigan Green Community Challenge, renewable energy seminars, a GFL facility tour, Electric Vehicle Charging Station Master Plan, the Drain Stencil Project, and a tree inventory.  |   |   |       |  |
| June 2022   |   |   |       |  |
| 1   | Agenda Item   | 1 | Title | Review of Tree Preservation Ordinance  |
|   | The Sustainability Commission review a revised draft of the Tree Preservation Ordinance with Ms. Albright of the City Attorney's Office. A number of amendments were made to the proposed draft.                            |   |       |  |
|   |   |   |       | Action: Recommendation made to City Council to adopt the revised draft of the ordinance. |
| The Sustainability Commission is briefed on several ongoing projects, including: Electric Vehicle Charging Station Master Plan, the Drain Stencil Project, and tree inventory, a joint meeting with the Youth Advisory Board, and a tour of the GFL facility.   |   |   |       |  |
| Updates regarding solar panel zoning, award applications, and limiting lawn mowing were provided by the Office of Planning  |   |   |       |  |
| July 2022   |   |   |       |  |
| 1   | Agenda Item   | 1 | Title | Sustainability Plan- Natural Assets Action Items Recap & A.S.W.O.T. Analysis             |
|   | The Sustainability Commission adopted a new format for tracking progress on implementing priority action items from the Sustainability Plan. They focused on the Natural Assets section of the plan first.                  |   |       |  |
|   |   |   |       | Action: No Action Required   |
| 2   | Agenda Item   | 2 | Title | 2021/2022 Sustainability Report  |
|   | Office of Planning presented the 2021/2022 Annual Report to the Sustainability Commission for approval. Some edits are made to the document.  |   |       |  |
|   |   |   |       | Action: Voted to approve the Sustainability Commission Annual Report.                    |
| The Sustainability Commission reelected Nathan Inks to be the Chair of the Commission, Mark Graf to be the Vice Chair of the Commission, and Jonathan Matthews to be the Secretary of the Commission.   |   |   |       |  |
| The Sustainability Commission is briefed on several ongoing projects, including: Electric Vehicle Charging Station Master Plan, Hosting a joint meeting with the Youth Advisory Board, The Drain Stencil Project, a potential Tree Canopy Study, a City Fleet Study, and proposed modifications to the ordinance. |   |   |       |  |
| The Office of Planning announces that the Sterling Heights Sustainability Plan has officially won the Michigan Association of Planning Excellence Award for Resiliency and Sustainability.  |   |   |       |  |
| August 2022 - Cancelled   |   |   |       |  |
| September 2022  |   |   |       |  |





|   |  |   |       |   |
|---|--|---|-------|---|
| 1 | Agenda Item  | 1 | Title | Sustainability Plan- Sustainable Mobility Action Items Overview |
|   | The Sustainability Commission reviewed the action items within the Sustainable Mobility Section utilizing the S.W.O.T. Analysis method.                              |   |       |   |
|   |  |   |       | Action: No Action Required                                      |
| 2 | Agenda Item  | 2 | Title | Impervious Surface Ordinance                                    |
|   | The Sustainability Commission was briefed on the Office of Planning's efforts to draft a new ordinance regulating pavement in the front yard of single family homes. |   |       |   |
|   |  |   |       | Action: No Action Required                                      |

The Sustainability Commission is briefed on several ongoing projects, including: Electric Vehicle Charging Station Master Plan, Hosting a joint meeting with the Youth Advisory Board, a potential Tree Canopy Study, and the ongoing Tree Survey.

## October 2022

|   |   |   |       |  |
|---|---|---|-------|--|
| 1 | Agenda Item   | 1 | Title | Tree Canopy  |
|   | Commission discussed a resolution to request that a Tree Canopy Study be done to determine the City's tree canopy, in comparison with the Green Macomb Tree Canopy Study that was done in 2016.   |   |       |  |
|   |   |   |       | Action: Approved a Resolution to request a Tree Canopy Study be conducted. |
| 2 | Agenda Item   | 2 | Title | Sustainability Plan- Sustainable Development Action Items                  |
|   | The Sustainability Commission reviewed the action items within the Sustainable Development Section utilizing the S.W.O.T. Analysis method.  |   |       |  |
|   |   |   |       | Action: No Action Required   |
| 3 | Agenda Item   | 3 | Title | City of Rockford Sustainability Efforts                                    |
|   | The Sustainability Commission discussed the efforts undertaken by the Sustainability Commission (SUSCOM) of the City of Rockford Michigan. Discussion was had on adapting some of Rockford's practices into the City of Sterling Heights. |   |       |  |
|   |   |   |       | Action: No Action Required   |

## November 2022

|   |  |   |       |   |
|---|--|---|-------|---|
| 1 | Agenda Item  | 1 | Title | Sustainability Plan- Environmental Stewardship Action Item Review |
|   | The Sustainability Commission reviewed the action items within the Environmental Stewardship Section utilizing the S.W.O.T. Analysis method.   |   |       |   |
|   |  |   |       | Action: No Action Required  |
| 2 | Agenda Item  | 2 | Title | EGLE Sustainability Conference                                    |
|   | Mr. Inks provided an update on the EGLE Sustainability Conference. Discussion was had regarding best practices that could be brought to Sterling Heights. Sterling Height's membership in the MI Green Communities Organization, and potential resources the City could utilize were also discussed. |   |       |   |
|   |  |   |       | Action: No Action Required  |
| 3 | Agenda Item  | 3 | Title | Carbon Emission Research  |
|   | The Sustainability Commission discussed tracking the City's Carbon Footprint in order to establish metrics that could be useful in the City's efforts to combat climate change.  |   |       |   |
|   |  |   |       | Action: No Action Required  |

## December 2022

|   |             |   |       |  |
|---|-------------|---|-------|--|
| 1 | Agenda Item | 1 | Title | Sustainability Plan- Full Action Item Review |
|---|-------------|---|-------|--|



|              |  |  |   |
|--------------|--|--|---|
|              | The Commission reviewed all action item documents, and the documents were consolidated into one living document which would be updated by the Commission as different Action Items are achieved.   |  |   |
|              |  | Action: No Action Required   |   |
| 2            | Agenda Item  | 2  | Title Resolution to Expand the Sustainability Commission                                  |
|              | The Commission begins discussion of expanding the number of sitting, voting members on the Sustainability Commission. Establishing committees focused on specific areas of importance is discussed, as well as the reporting structure for these potential committees.   |  |   |
|              |  | Action: No Action Required   |   |
| 3            | Agenda Item  | 3  | Title MI Recycling Coalition and 41 <sup>st</sup> Annual Recycling & Organics Conference. |
|              | The Commission discusses having the City join the Michigan Recycling Coalition. Also discussed is having staff or Commission members attend the 41 <sup>st</sup> Annual Recycling and Organics Conference in 2023, and the potential benefits such participation would bring to the City.  |  |   |
|              |  | Action: No Action Required   |   |
| 4            | Agenda Item  | 4  | Title Federal Grants Pursuits   |
|              | The Commission is briefed on current federal grant pursuits being sought out by the City. Discussion is had to have a representative from Wade Trimm, the City's grant hunting consulting firm, attend a future meeting to provide a more detailed update to the Commission.   |  |   |
|              |  | Action: No Action Required   |   |
| January 2023 |  |  |   |
| 1            | Agenda Item  | 1  | Title Committees  |
|              | The Commission considered and voted to create three Committees that shall focus on specific policy areas, with the following membership:<br><br>Reduce, Reuse, Recycle Committee, made up of Matthews, Skillin, and Tabbert <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Chair: Matthews</li></ul> Green Energy Committee, made up of Inks and Tabbert <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Chair: Tabbert</li></ul> Stormwater and Wetlands Committee, made up of Inks, Matthews, and Skillin <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Chair: Inks</li></ul> |  |   |
|              |  | Action: Committees were created  |   |
| 2            | Agenda Item  | 2  | Title Expansion of the Sustainability Commission  |
|              | The Commission discussed expansion of their membership. Discussion was had about having regular meetings with other Boards and Commissions, including the Youth Advisory Board. The Commission determined 11 voting members would be sufficient for their goals.   |  |   |
|              |  | Action: Motion to request City Council expand the Sustainability Commission to Eleven Members. |   |
| 3            | Agenda Item  | 3  | Title Youth Advisory Board Update   |
|              | Members of the Office of Planning, Youth Advisory Board, and Sustainability Commission sat down in January to discuss sustainability initiatives across the City. Priority areas for the youth were discussed, such as: recycling, green roofs, sustainable mobility along Hall Road, cleaning up he Clinton River, the Drain Stencil Project, and education in the City.  |  |   |
|              |  | Action: No Action Required   |   |
| 4            | Agenda Item  | 4  | Title Tree Survey Update  |
|              | The Commission was given updates on the Tree Survey being conducted by Davey Tree. TreeKeeper was discussed in depth, and the merits of a TreeKeeper subscription were discussed.  |  |   |
|              |  | Action: Motion to postpone consideration to the February 2023 meeting.                         |   |



The Sustainability Commission was updated on ongoing projects, including the following: Joining the Michigan Recycling Coalition, Electric Vehicle Charging Station Master Plan, Impervious Surface Ordinance, Carbon Footprint Tracking, and implementing compostable cutlery at City events.

## February 2023

|   |  |   |   |                                 |
|---|--|---|---|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Agenda Item  | 1 | Title   | Grant Funding Education Session |
|   | Wayne Hofmann, from City consulting firm Wade Trim, held an education session with the Sustainability Commission about grant opportunities being pursued by the City. The conversation primarily focused on sustainability related grants, and how Wade Trim was constantly hunting for grants and funding that the City could secure. |   |   |                                 |
|   | Action: No Action Required   |   |   |                                 |
| 2 | Agenda Item  | 2 | Title   | Pavement Ordinance              |
|   | The Office of Planning presented an ordinance to limit the amount of pavement allowed on single family parcels to the Commission. Discussion was had regarding sustainability aspects of the ordinance change.   |   |   |                                 |
| 3 |  |   | Action: Motion to recommend approval of the ordinance change to City Council. |                                 |
|   | Agenda Item  | 3 | Title   | TreeKeeper Subscription         |
|   | The Commission discussed the TreeKeeper subscription was discussed again, this time the conversation focused on how other departments could benefit from its use.  |   |   |                                 |
|   | Action: Motion to postpone consideration until the March 2023 meeting.   |   |   |                                 |

From this point on, updates from each Committee becomes a regular agenda item. Committees give regular reports about their respective policy areas.





## March 2023

|   |  |   |       |   |
|---|--|---|-------|---|
| 1 | Agenda Item  | 1 | Title | TreeKeeper Subscription                           |
|   | The Commission was updated on an internal meeting regarding TreeKeeper, and how the City could utilize the service. Next meeting a further update will be provided.  |   |       |   |
|   | Action: No Action Required   |   |       |   |
| 2 | Agenda Item  | 2 | Title | Climate Action Plan                               |
|   | The Sustainability Commission discussed implementation of a Climate Action Plan, and whether or not it should be integrated with the Master Land Use Plan.   |   |       |   |
|   | Action: No Action Required   |   |       |   |
| 3 | Agenda Item  |   | Title | Collaboration with the Detroit Zoological Society |
|   | The Commission was updated on meetings between the Chair and the Office of Planning with the Detroit Zoological Society (DZS). Several opportunities to partner on education were discussed, including about plantings and wildlife. The DZS expressed interest in handing out trees to Sterling Heights residents, and hosting events at the Nature Center. |   |       |   |
|   | Action: No Action Required   |   |       |   |

## April 2023

|   |   |   |       |                              |
|---|---|---|-------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Agenda Item   | 1 | Title | Formal Opinion on the Budget |
|   | The Commission discussed in detail the proposed budget for the City, and how to best influence the budget going forward to integrate sustainability principles. The Commission agrees to have further conversations about sustainable budgeting.  |   |       |                              |
|   | Action: No Action Required  |   |       |                              |
| 2 | Agenda Item   | 2 | Title | Think Sterling Green         |
|   | The Office of Planning updates the Commission on the Think Sterling Green initiative, an initiative launched by the Community Relations Department in order to have one combined message when it comes to Sustainability. This initiative includes grants, the Sustainability Commission, and all other sustainability focused projects in the City.      |   |       |                              |
|   | Action: No Action Required  |   |       |                              |
| 3 | Agenda Item   | 3 | Title | Recreation on the Run        |
|   | The Office of Planning presented a cooperation opportunity for the Commission. The Parks and Recreation Department is conducting a series of events this summer called Rec on the Run, and the Sustainability Commission has the opportunity to help. The Commission expressed interest in assisting with the June 19 <sup>th</sup> Rec on the Run event. |   |       |                              |
|   | Action: No Action Required  |   |       |                              |

The Commission is updated on several ongoing projects, including: The pavement ordinance, expansion of the Commission, the Master Land Use Plan and Climate Action Plan, and several others.