



# 2021-2022

## SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT

June 2021-June 2022

SUSTAINABILITY COMMISSION

Office of Planning

July 5th, 2022



## 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		Liaison
Ryan Fox		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, water, and fuel; improvement of air, climate, and water quality; investment in renewable energy; reduction of waste; and protecting and restoring the community's natural resources;
- (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 2021/2022:

The Sustainability Commission was able to hold regular in person meetings again, starting this year. Meeting in person made discussion easier and overall increase the efficiency of the Commission. One of the largest projects taken on by the Commission this year was the revision of the City's tree preservation ordinance, which was made much more complicated by a landmark decision made in the 6<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court in the case of F. P. Development v. Charter Township of Canton. The ruling called into question the constitutionality of municipal ordinances that require a developer to either pay into a tree replacement fund or preserve or replace trees that the developer wishes to remove from its property. The Commission had to delay its redraft to make sure it accounted for this ruling. With the diligent work of the City Attorney's Office, Office of Planning, and Sustainability Commission, a final draft of the new tree preservation ordinance was recommended to the City Council on June 15<sup>th</sup> 2022, at the final meeting of the Sustainability Commission in this fiscal year.



## Meetings

May 2021				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Sustainability Plan Re-Review
	The Commission did a final review of the Sustainability Plan before recommendation to Council. Details such as citations, timelines for the Innovate Mound initiative, and the Iron Belle Trail are discussed.			
	Action: No Action Required			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Update to Green Macomb Tree Inventory
	Office of Planning updated the Commission on Green Macomb’s training on how to properly inventory trees. The Commission is invited to participate in the training and given scheduling and content details.			
	Action: No Action Required			
June 2021				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Sustainability Plan Review Final Draft
	The Commission conducted its final review of the Sustainability Plan before it was to be presented to City Council. The Commission makes minor grammatical and structural changes, but no major content changes are made.			
	Action: Voted to recommend approval to City Council			
July 2021 - Cancelled				
August 2021				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	September 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2021 City Council Presentation Review
	To review Mr. McLeod’s presentation of the Sustainability Plan to City Council.			
	Action: Approved			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	City Tree Inventory- Discussion of Sections to be Inventoried
	Discussion of a tree inventory survey for a limited number of City sections.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			
3	Agenda Item	3	Title	Sustainability Plan Review/Implementation Timeline Overview
	Discussion took place in general about the Sustainability Plan, and to gauge which of the Action Items were the Commissions first priority.			
	Action: No action necessary			
September 2021				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Implementation Priorities
	Commission discussed a timeline of implementation priorities from the Sustainability Plan. Each member will rank their priorities, and the Commission will make master priority list later on.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Woodland Preservation and Tree Preservation Follow-Up
	Office of Planning and City Attorney’s Office announce that they will have a draft ordinance prepared within 80 days. Discussion is had regarding the scope of the tree preservation ordinance redraft.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			



October 2021				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Implementation Priorities Matrix Overview and Discussion
	The Commission goes through the overall cost and benefit numeration of each action item in the Sustainability Plan. Commissioners discussed their opinions on which priorities should come first, ranking their top 24 priorities. This list will be shortened to 15 items during the next meeting.			
	Action: No Action was Taken			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Tree Inventory Update/Green Macomb – Kickoff Date
	Office of Planning updates the Commission that Tuesday, October 26 <sup>th</sup> will be the start of the small scale tree inventory survey. An event will be held that day to launch the event, where the scale and parameters of the tree inventory will be explained.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			
3	Agenda Item	3	Title	Tree Removal Ordinance Updates
	Office of Planning briefs the Commission on a court case that deals directly with tree preservation ordinances. Review of the ordinance will shift towards making it compliant with the circuit court ruling, along with focusing on the preservation of landmark trees.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			
4	Agenda Item	4	Title	ARPA Fund Projects
	Commission is briefed on the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and the proposed funds the City will receive as a result. City Council will hold forums to determine public priorities for the funds, which are earmarked for 2024.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			
5	Agenda Item	5	Title	Drain Stencil with Arts Commission Project
	Mr. Graf updated Commission on his work with Melanie Davis from Community Relations. A competition was proposed, where local high school students would submit designs for the drain stencils.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			
6	Agenda Item	6	Title	Grant for City's Electronic Vehicle Charging Station Master Plan
	Commission is updated on the City earning a grant to create the electric vehicle charging station master plan. The grant was for \$35,000, with the City paying an additional \$6,000 to complete the project.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			
November 2021				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Implementation Priorities Matrix Overview & Discussion
	The Commission determined the formatting of its top 15 priorities, choosing to not rank them in a particular order. This format would be presented to Council.			
	Action: No Action Required			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Tree Inventory Update/Green Macomb – Tree Survey Update
	The Commission is given an in depth update of the results of the Tree Inventory Survey. Discussion is had on how ARPA funds may be used to plant street trees, and how grants could be used to increase tree plantings in City parks.			
	Action: No Action Required			
3	Agenda Item	3	Title	Stormwater Conference



	The Commission discusses a stormwater conference that was held earlier in November. Stormwater utilities in other municipalities were discussed at the conference, as well as rainwater collection and permeable surfaces. Commission discussed how the tri-county area will soon have updated stormwater standards.		
	Action: No Action Required		

## December 2021- Cancelled

## January 2022

	Agenda Item	1	Title	Strategic Planning Preparation and Discussion
1	Commission was invited to attend the City Strategic Planning Meeting on January 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2022. The Commission will attend along with the Community Alliance, the African American Coalition, and the Youth Advisory Board.			
	Action: No Action Required			
	Agenda Item	2	Title	Parks, Recreation, and Non-Motorized Master Plan Discussion
2	City Council had adopted a new Parks, Recreation, and Non-Motorized Plan on January 4 <sup>th</sup> , 2022 for the Parks and Recreation Department. Discussion was had on how the goals of that plan and the goals of the Sustainability Plan align, and how the two plans can work together to achieve their goals.			
	Action: No Action Required			
	Agenda Item	3	Title	Review of Drain Stencil Submissions
3	The Commission reviewed student entrees for the Drain Stencil project. The Commission chose there top three, which the Office of Planning then brought to the Community Relations Department.			
	Action: No Action Required			
	Agenda Item	4	Title	Tree Inventory Update/Green Macomb- Tree Survey Update
4	Commission discussed the training materials used to train tree surveyors, so that the Commission could better understand how tree quality is graded.			
	Action: No Action Required			
	Agenda Item	5	Title	Tree Removal Ordinance Update
5	Office of Planning gave the Commission an update on F. P. Development vs. Charter Township of Canton. Commission discussed its implications on City ordinance.			
	Action: No Action Required			

Beginning in January, discussion of the Tree Preservation Ordinance became a standard agenda item for the Commission. At each meeting the Commission discussed the substance of the ordinance, with a focus on the following two goals: making sure the ordinance accounted for the preservation of landmark trees and ensuring the ordinance is in line with the ruling in F. P. Development vs. Charter Township of Canton.

## February 2022

	Agenda Item	1	Title	Drain Stencil Project: Updates, Drain Locations, etc.
1	The Office of Planning provided an overview of the ultimate implementation of what this program may look like, based on communications with the Community Relations Department. Volunteers would stencil drains in order to raise awareness of how harmful dumping waste in drains can be.			
	Action: No Action Required			
	Agenda Item	2	Title	Tree Inventory Review by Davey Group
2	The Office of Planning displayed the specified benefit yield that was collected as part of the tree survey, which was performed by the Davey Group. Discussion is had on expanding the tree survey to other sections of the City.			
	Action: No Action Required			



3	Agenda Item	3	Title	Strategic Planning Recap, Next Steps
	Commission is briefed by the Office of Planning on the strategic planning meeting held on January 25 <sup>th</sup> , 2022. The Commission discusses how to take the feedback from City Council, and how to act on their action items.			
	Action: No Action Required			
4	Agenda Item		Title	Action Items Pursuant to Master Plan
	City Council requests that the Commission provide information regarding the creation of a pedestrian bridge from Kleino to Edison across the Clinton River. Acquiring property along 17 Mile, Utica, and Schoenherr is in the Recreation Master Plan, and discussion is had on how such a bridge could be helpful to connect the southern half of the City with the Clinton River Trail System.			
	Action: No Action Required			
March 2022				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Sustainability Plan-Natural Assets Action Item Review
	The Commission discussed the implementation of each action item in the natural assets section of the Sustainability Plan. Wetlands ordinance is discussed, as is the expansion of the existing nature trail network.			
	Action: No Action Taken			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Youth Advisory Board Joint Meeting
	The Sustainability Commission discussed the idea of holding a meeting with the Youth Advisory Board, so that they could better understand what the Board would like to see from the Commission.			
	Action: No Action Required			
April 2022				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Acquisition of City Property
	The Commission is briefed on expenditures approved by the City Council of several parcels of land, including a \$1,000,000 purchase of land for a park, \$1,000,000 for the expansion and improvement of Riverland Park, and several other projects. Also discussed is the possibility of a potential project to connect trails in the City, centering on Kleino Road.			
	Action: No Action Necessary			
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	ITree Tools Survey and ARC GIS Tool Update
	The Commission discussed the ITree Tool, to potentially track the canopy cover of the City over the years. The Commission also discusses modifying the cities Arc GIS tool to display which properties are environmentally vulnerable to developers, so that they better understand the environmental costs to develop parcels earlier in the process.			
	Action: No Action Taken			
The Commission reviewed the new draft of the Tree Preservation ordinance extensively, with Ms. Alyssa Albright of the City Attorney's Office. Many changes to the ordinance are proposed and worked into the draft.				
May 2022				
1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Review of Chapter 51, Article III, Tree Preservation
	The Commission and City Attorney's Office once again reviewed the proposed amendment to the City's tree preservation ordinance. Several more edits where made, changing phrasing to make it easily comprehensible to developers and the general public.			
	Action: Tabled until the June meeting.			
The Commission is updated on several ongoing projects, including: The Drain Stencil Project, the status of the Electric Vehicle Charging Station Master Plan, and the upcoming Tree Survey.				
June 2022				



1	Agenda Item	1	Title	Continued Review of Chapter 51, Article III, Tree Preservation
	The Commission worked on the final draft of the tree preservation ordinance before presenting it to Council. The final draft incorporates landmark tree preservation, while also ensuring the ordinance is in line with the decision in F. P. Development v. Charter Township of Canton.			
				Action: Voted to recommend approval to City Council
2	Agenda Item	2	Title	Solar Panel Zoning Seminar
	The Office of Planning and several Commissioners attended a seminar pertaining to solar panel zoning in Michigan. Discussion looking into ordinances regarding solar panel usage took place.			
				Action: No Action Required
The Commission is updated regarding several ongoing projects, including: The Electric Vehicle Charging Station Master Plan, The Drain Stencil Project, attending a meeting of the Youth Advisory Board, and Award Applications submitted by the Office of Planning regarding the Sustainability Plan.				