

Advancing Sustainability through the City of Gary Building Department

Impact on Sustainability

- Municipal building departments can play a tremendous role in mitigating the environmental impact created by a community's buildings, which can in turn greatly influence the overall environmental footprint of a community.
- Most community GHG emissions are the result of the energy consumed to make residential buildings habitable and to power commercial and industrial buildings and equipment.
- Building codes and approval processes can be used to increase the sustainability of construction projects and building maintenance.
- Sustainable office procedures can positively influence the environmental impact and costs of Building Department operations.

Current Supportive Practices

- E-Permitting. The building department has an electronic platform to apply and pay for building department permits.
- Push to go paperless in 2019. Paper copies of permits and applications will be provided to customers if needed for display or requested, but only electronic copies will be kept on file. Paper copies can then be printed on demand, reducing paper consumption, cost, and storage space requirements.

Standout Projects

Anticipated Project

- Conduct more outreach on code enforcement and rental registration to increase awareness of building standards and registration schedules in order to reduce cases of non-compliance, build stronger relationships between building operators and the city, reduce fines, and increase available time for other departmental functions.

Anticipated Project

- The Building Department plans to provide more training for the Gary Contractor Licensing Exam.

Mayor's Sustainability Metrics

- Number of outreach events conducted annually
- List of governance changes made annually to increase green building in the city
- Average permitting review time
- Number of files digitized; amount of paper recycled during transition to paperless operations (coordinate with General Services and Recycling Department for recycling data)

Departmental Overview

- The Gary Building Department enforces the city's building code and administers building related permits and licenses (residential, commercial, industrial). The Building Department is a Division of the Commerce Department.

Priority Recommendations

Short-term • Achievable in 1-2 years

Service Functions

- Add a field on general business license application & renewal forms to indicate applicants' waste disposal and reduction plan pursuant to the Solid Waste Recycling Plan Ordinance.
- Increase public outreach on energy efficiency and weatherization in addition to outreach on regulations.
- Partner with the Workforce Development branch of Economic Development to connect small, "handyman" businesses with the resources they need to become licensed and insured contractors, enabling them to grow their businesses.
- Outline an expedited permitting processes for sustainably designed and managed projects, the incentive for developers being time saved.
- Work with the Redevelopment Department and Environmental Affairs to set building efficiency goals and take action to achieve them.

Departmental Operations

- Improve use of recycling bins. Make recycling paper standard procedure, especially as the department digitally archives many of its current paper files.
- Identify opportunities like grants to digitize historic documents and make them publicly available online.

Longer-term • Undertake after increasing effectiveness of current programs

- Codify green building practices and energy efficiency measures, such as elements of the International Green Construction Code (IgCC) or solar-ready guidelines.
- Work with all Commerce Department Divisions to engage commercial building managers to voluntarily improve their environmental performance.

Recommendations continued on back

Resources

- **Other Departments/Divisions:** Gary Department of Environmental Affairs & Green Urbanism, Law Department, Workforce Development Branch of the Gary Economic Development Corporation, Redevelopment Department, Community Development

See Green Urbanism's list of resources for:

- Green Building Rating Systems
- Green Building Code Examples
- Supportive Permitting
- Grants for digitization of historic documents

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Recommendations

Short-term • Achievable in 1-2 years

Service Functions

- Add a field on general business license application & renewal forms to indicate applicants' waste disposal and reduction plan pursuant to the Solid Waste Recycling Plan Ordinance. This is a first step to holding businesses accountable for properly disposing of and working to reduce their waste.

- Develop and provide outreach materials to contractors and homeowners on the benefits of energy efficiency and weatherization and available programs to support building upgrades. Even without a stringent energy or construction code, the community could benefit from voluntary actions to improve building performance.

- Work with the Redevelopment and Environmental Affairs Departments to set building efficiency goals and determine how those goals could be supported by governance changes in Gary. Identify opportunities to retrofit municipal buildings to improve performance. Set a goal for all new municipal buildings to meet green building standards such as Energy Star, LEED, Green Globes, etc.

- Outline an expedited permitting processes for green building projects, the incentive for developers being time saved. Consider offering reduced fees if possible.

- Partner with the Workforce Development branch of Economic Development to connect small, "handyman" businesses with the resources they need to become licensed and insured contractors.

- Host healthy homes workshops in collaboration with Environmental Affairs & Green Urbanism, Community Development, and COG partners.

Departmental Operations

- Continue to move toward an electronic filing system.

- In addition to current printing limits, print double-sided whenever possible and make sure it is easy for employees to scan directly to email.

- Record amount of paper recycled as the office digitizes its large quantity of paper files. Measuring discarded materials will help incentivize employees to recycle during the cleaning process. It will also help illustrate the magnitude of the transition from paper and help communicate the accomplishment.

- Identify opportunities to digitize historic documents and make them publicly available online. Look for funding to support digitization of historically significant documents, electronic media preservation, architectural outreach, etc.

- Improve use of recycling bins. Have Recycling Department deliver more recycling bins so that paper and employee waste are less likely to be mixed in with garbage due to lack of available bins.

Medium-term • Achievable in 2-5 years

Adopt Supportive Policies

- Codify green building practices and energy efficiency measures, such as elements of the International Green Construction Code (IgCC) or solar-ready guidelines.

Examples: Adopting a municipal energy code for residential and/or commercial buildings that is above standards set by the state. Consider adopting a commercial building energy benchmarking ordinance similar to the one in Chicago.

Service Functions

- Work with all Commerce Department Divisions to engage commercial building managers to voluntarily improve their environmental performance. This could take the form of a Green Business Challenge independently created by the city or organizing a group of properties to participate in an existing challenge, like the 2030 Challenge.

- Assist Environmental Affairs in pursuing SolSmart Designation. The process of applying will help the city define and streamline its approval processes for solar energy projects, readying it to support clean energy generation within its borders. Designation will ensure systems are in place that will save the city and its customers time and money, open the door for federal technical assistance, and provide positive recognition.

- Appoint or hire an energy manager. With other departments, appoint a staff member to identify and direct energy related projects for municipal operations and the public. This person does not need be Building Department staff, but the department would be a key partner in their work.

Full set of recommendations and resources available from Green Urbanism