

THE MID-MICHIGAN PROGRAM FOR GREATER SUSTAINABILITY (MMPGS) PROGRESS REPORT February 1, 2012 – June 30, 2012

We are pleased to provide a semi-annual progress report on the Mid-Michigan Program for Greater Sustainability (MMPGS). This is an overview of the major accomplishments we have achieved during the first months of our HUD-OSHC Planning Grant. We have provided an overview of our organizational and initiating efforts with further detail outlined by project area as in the grant work plan.

Overall Project Organization and Administration:

During the first semiannual reporting period, the MMPGS partners have explored and examined project strategies and work plan details. We have established a preliminary administrative structure, initiated meaningful analysis and begun identifying baselines. We have worked together as a regional team to refine some strategies, convened a consortium of stakeholders and expanded it. TCRPC compiled and shared an overall project matrix and activities schedule and all information has been placed on the TCRPC website www.mitcrpc.org in interest of full transparency.

BUILDING PARTNER AND STAKEHOLDER RELATIONSHIPS

Project Partners – Sub-Recipients

The core team of sub-recipients met monthly or more to discuss details of strategies, project activities, and overarching or common goals. This is a primary effort to integrate the different projects and planning areas. Project work agreements were developed with each to include the projects listed in the matrix.

Regional Participants –Stakeholders

More than 110 people participated in a kick-off event of our regional consortium – a broad based stakeholders group, held in April. Then, more than 90 attended the June consortium meeting – an expansion of the participation that included more general citizens especially those from some underserved categories. Both consortium events included sessions to encourage discussion of the project areas, reviewing questions. They also invited active commitments to a task group.

We have invested time to initiate and develop important working relationships with State of Michigan Departments and local representatives that will help us leverage existing planning activities and enhance our regional integration. These key partnerships are particularly with the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), the Michigan Department of Transportation, and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. We have also included our HUD Sustainability Officer Anthony Martin and met regularly with our GTR Steven Cerny. We were pleased to host both for a site visit and tour of our region that included meetings and demonstrations with our partners and area officials. Statewide and regional meetings have also been facilitated under MMPGS including statewide grantee meetings, presentations to

community and civic groups, and HUD training in Washington as well as a Chicago Summit for Midwest grantees.

Projects 1 and 2: Develop a Regional 5 year Comprehensive Fair and Affordable Housing Plan; Conduct a Regional Affordable Housing Study

This project work is being completed by Dr. Suk-Kyung Kim of Michigan State University and Katherine Draper, Director of the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition (a local nonprofit). All research activities for the project are on track with the original timeline. The project leaders have begun inviting and forming an advisory task force group to assist and guide their efforts. They successfully accomplished the following tasks during the reporting period:

- Completed the initial analysis about the housing stock in the State of Michigan, Eaton County, Clinton County and Ingham County based on American Community Survey and American Fact Finder.
- Extended housing stock analyses to 16 communities in the tri-county area.
- Presented the research scope and several key findings at the consortium meeting on June 28th.
- Two qualified research assistants have been identified for housing data analysis, housing market and condition reviews. They will draft an analysis report by mid-September.
- Develop a list of housing task force members with the Greater Lansing Housing Coalition.
- Met with the Director of the Office for Survey Research at Michigan State University to discuss data collection led by OSR and established the contract document for the collaboration with them.
- Reviewed affordable housing programs offered by HUD and MSHDA (Michigan State Housing Development Authority) and summarized the program features.

Project 3: Community Reinvestment Fund

This project is moving forward quickly and is slightly ahead of its proposed work schedule. The Project Coordinator Julie Powers of Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Council has worked with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission to develop procedures for financial management. The MMPGS's overall steering committee, a sub-committee of the Tri-County Regional Commissioners (area elected and appointed municipal officials) met a number of times to discuss the project goals, identify good practices for a mini-grant program. Then, they issued invitations and general announcements inviting applications to form a Fund Board that will consider grant applications, monitor funded activities, and mentor the mini-grant recipients to assure that we meet project goals of increasing the involvement of underserved and marginalized populations in regional and local planning activities in our community. A Fund Board has been appointed by the Commission and includes three representatives from each of our three counties. For each county, they include an elected official, an underserved or marginalized population group, and a general citizen. The Steering Committee of the Commission has also met and begun development of the criteria and application process for the reinvestment fund disbursements.

Project 4 – Energy Baseline Study of Corridor

As a core partner, Michigan Energy Options (MEO) has been very active in partner meetings and consortium events. Members of MEO sit on several taskforces, including communications, portal, energy and corridor. MEO continues to support the Mid-Michigan Program for Greater Sustainability and is dedicated to the success of all projects of this program.

The few communities in Michigan, such as Holland, that have a comprehensive energy plan for the decades ahead have as the foundation of such a plan an energy consumption baseline. The baseline typically consists of the energy being consumed in the buildings (“the built environment”) and in transportation. Our study focuses solely on the built environment on our demonstration corridor, the Michigan Avenue/Grand River Avenue corridor. The study area focus for this project is specifically along the 25-mile transect between Webberville and the Michigan State Capitol. Our study encompasses an area that is a ¼ mile on either side of this transect.

Such a demarcation has presented immediate challenges to us in designing the study and locating data sources. We have been addressing these challenges in this early phase of the project through research, stakeholder engagement and consultation with experts. These challenges include:

- The corridor crosses multiple governmental jurisdictions: townships, villages and cities.
- The corridor encompasses three utility service territories. Additionally, two utilities service areas overlap with one providing electricity and the other providing natural gas.
- The corridor is not designated or managed as a whole by the entities possessing the data necessary for the study. In other words, a township energy baseline study would fall within established jurisdictions. The tax assessor knows which buildings are in the township. Similarly, a utility knows who its customers are. We must identify the buildings within our study area, using multiple means such as utility data, county tax maps, and GIS.

These challenges are also opportunities. The corridor approach offers a unique opportunity to provide an energy portrait of different communities (rural to suburban to urban) and captures all the major building types found in the region: agricultural, industrial, commercial, retail, multifamily residential, single-family residential and public. We are reaching out to inform stakeholders, such as local units of governments, of our study. We are also working with an existing energy program targeting businesses in Meridian Charter Township to use that as a mechanism to reach interested parties. We have also met with the Lansing Board of Water & Light and have established that the utility will provide aggregate energy data for their customers within their service territory by city block. The Board is also providing staff time to this effort, in-kind. We are leveraging the Board’s sign-on as we begin discussions with the other two utilities for similar data. To date, research and consultations with experts include: Center for Neighborhood Technology, SEEDS, Garforth International, University of Michigan, Shepherd Advisors, and Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance.

We will continue to define the buildings within the study area and gather energy consumption per sector from the utilities. Such aggregate data will augment this eventually with building-specific data from audits and residents and buildings opting in to providing their data for this study. We are also discussing with GIS experts the creation of an interactive map that to represent the iterative findings of the study.

Project 5: Build Capacity for a Regional Urban Service Management Area

The project activities continue and are on time to date. Monthly meetings of the Regional Urban Services Management Area Committee have been focused on identifying and adding additional members to fill out the committee's perspectives. They have reviewed and identified a number of key action steps to take over the next year and have initiated a public outreach plan for activities to promote and extend understanding in the community. A technical subcommittee was formed to identify model master plan and zoning language that could be shared with local municipalities. An unpaid student intern has been brought on to begin collecting and analyzing some zoning ordinances for "sustainability" language and mechanisms.

Project 6: Greening of Mid -Michigan

Element 1: Groundwater Management Board: The Groundwater Management Board met twice during the report period and discussed the project initiatives in this element and their fit with the Board's annual work plan. They have identified a tentative schedule of groundwater protection audits with the refinement of an audit tool to use.

Element 2: Middle Grand River Organization of Watersheds: Two kick-off meetings of the newly forming Middle Grand River Organization of Watersheds (MGROW) were held during this report period. Over 50 area citizens, water enthusiasts, and representatives of the region's water sports and watershed area protection organizations participated actively and have indicated support of a regional umbrella organization. One meeting was held at the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission offices in Delhi Township, south of the City of Lansing. The other kickoff event was held in the northern part of our region, in St. Johns, central Clinton County. Geographically this provided an opportunity for stakeholders to attend at the most convenient location. The purpose of the meetings was to establish an initial contact and connection with stakeholders in the watershed. This includes but is not limited to conservation districts, "friends of rivers" groups, municipal officials, anglers, paddle groups, conservation groups, riparian land owners, etc. The MGROW organization has now developed bylaws, identified officers and a membership structure, and begun to discuss dues and supports to assure the long term viability of the group while they initiate a regional list of objectives and activities.

A needs assessment of the stakeholders was completed with an interactive electronic survey process. The results of the needs assessment will be tabulated, and reviewed in great detail with the MGROW Board. The results will help steer MGROW's activities and will help to prioritize efforts in the future. The information will be tabulated and reviewed by the MGROW Board at their July meeting.

Element 3: Greening Mid-Michigan Visioning Process: The sub-recipient partner on this element is Meridian Township. Their staff and elected officials have been involved with MMPGS in several ways during the report period. In addition to their participation in the kick-off events and program-wide meetings, organizational sessions, and work plan development, they have convened area residents and leaders to plan specific activities in support of the MMPGS. This project element includes communications and outreach activities which are on track with the work program and have been instrumental in assuring growing participation and interest in MMPGS by area residents and organizations. Green Shows, locally produced film shows that

present sustainability issues and practices, will promote the MMPGS and related activities, and showcases area greening efforts.

- Prepared a list of policies, practices, and plans related to sustainability <http://recycle.meridian.mi.us/policy/>
- Developed and distributed invitation to share ideas and participate in “Green Shows.” Continued to develop ideas for Green Shows Compiled suggestions from 7 small groups for topics, projects, events, people, etc. that might be featured on a Green Show.
- Helped develop script for Mind Mixer Promo Video
- Compiled a list of “green” segments produced by HOMTV that are currently available on-line (see <http://recycle.meridian.mi.us/news/july-2112.1.pdf>)

Some of the many specific activities include the following (with links to some of the materials and events described):

- Meridian Green Team Tour of Michigan Energy Options
- The Meridian Township municipal cable station, CAMTV/HOMTV covered the MMPGS Consortium kick-off event and aired it on the local cable station. View at <http://bit.ly/mmpgs-1>
- Shared “Green Calendar” for use by partners and the public <http://bit.ly/greenergreen>
- Began filming promotion for Mind Mixer Site: <http://ideas.midmichigansustainability.org>
- Placed information about the MMPGS in a variety of publications in the region for example the Township newsletter, “Green Gazette” Compiled some graphics/images illustrating “sustainability concepts” for future use in encouraging discussion on sustainability and how to integrate its concepts in our daily practices <http://bit.ly/mmpgs-3>
- Prepared summary of Energy Roundtable Discussion from Kick-Off <http://bit.ly/mmpgs-energy1>

Project 7: Sustainable Corridor Design Portfolio Project

The Project 7 Corridor Design Portfolio project is a little behind the proposed schedule but expects to catch up to the work plan schedule before the close of the next reporting period. The main delay was associated with negotiating agreement between the Michigan State Housing Development Authority’s matching funds grant work and the identification of possible specific Charette planning events and schedules. During the last week of June, the issue was resolved and TCRPC has been awarded MSHDA funds to support complimentary activities for the Housing (Projects 1 & 2) and this Corridor Design project work.

Sustainability Training: The TCRPC in collaboration with MSU partners and the Michigan Municipal League co-hosted the 2012 Sustainable Communities Leadership Academy to train local officials on the principles and practice of local sustainability planning. The primary purpose of this workshop was to deliver educational information on best practices for implementing local sustainable communities to elected and appointed officials within the Tri-County area. The workshop attracted 79 participants from across the state, 19 within the Tri-County area alone. Certificates of completion were offered to 66 attendees who were able to complete the entire program.

The two-day workshop offered a certificate of completion. The curriculum included presentations on an introduction to sustainable communities, energy, local food, the new economy, mobility, the built environment, natural resources and community capacity. Supplemental material included presentations on LEED ND, climate change and a panel discussion on the successes in sustainability planning featuring local planning officials.

The Audit Tool work to date has consisted of compiling a task and timeline based upon the research information regarding assessing sustainability. This research has identified general information such as various definitions of sustainability and similar concepts. The research has reviewed the perspectives of the major players and their accepted tenets and guidelines (e.g. the Federal and Livability guidelines, or the APA and Smart Growth guidelines, the LEED and their Principles, or the ICLEI and its guidelines). A second-round of research has focused on the quantifiable metrics, legal issues, and academic journal support. Finally, working with the existing foundation of SGRAT and co-partners, a prototype tool is being drafted that addresses the needs of the co-partners and includes accepted best practices and regional stakeholder priorities.

Student Design Studio: The Michigan State University (MSU) project partners, particularly Dr. Paul Nieratko and Mr. Wycoff have had conversations with many stakeholders along the corridor concerning key issues. Their MSU team has met internally and with external partners to begin shaping design project activities, timelines and schedules that accommodate the students' practicum classes as well as collection of basic data from most of the jurisdictions regarding the status of local planning and zoning along the corridor. They have prepared some basic corridor maps for internal use and staff members have begun to inform themselves about land use, demographic and economic circumstances along the corridor. They have traveled the Michigan/Grand River Avenue Corridor by foot, transit and bike. They have talked with the City of East Lansing about possible design sites along the corridor.

The MSU Land Policy Institute (LPI) needs to be involved with TCRPC very soon on the relationship of all taskforces and Committees involved in MMPGS and their relationship to the individual projects.

Project 8: Complete Streets

Elements: Safe Routes to Schools, Complete Streets ordinance development with local municipalities, promote and support Smart Commute and Walk-Bike programs.

The project partners in these activities are the Mid-Michigan Environmental Action Coalition, the Michigan Fitness Foundation (MFF), and the Trails and Greenways Alliance in mid-Michigan.

This project and its elements are underway and on track per the work plan schedule. The MFF partners convened and facilitated a gathering of bicycle and walking organizations to establish an umbrella support coalition, the "Mid-Michigan Active Transportation Coalition" which enjoyed the participation of over 30 on a weekday evening in June. The group discussed issues of concern or interest to all and began identification of actions steps to improve multimodal transportation and access throughout the region. They have also initiated contacts with regional transportation planning offices and compatible intermediate school district facilities offices regarding future safe routes to schools audits and programs in the region.

Project 9 – On Line Communications Portal

This primary partner with Tri-County Regional Planning Commission in this project is Henry Love of the Michigan Energy Options. The project work moved quickly in the first months of our program and continues to lead in MMPGS activities. The communications and information sharing role of this project is important to the success of all of the above projects. The MMPGS “portal” is a collection of applications and web-based platforms that allow both the consortium and the citizens of Eaton, Clinton and Ingham Counties in mid-Michigan to explore and interact with the projects funded by this grant and the sustainable development of their region. There are multiple components to the portal and each act as a facilitator to building community awareness and collecting public feedback.

The first operational component of the Portal is an idea sharing platform called Mind Mixer (www.mindmixer.com). Mind Mixer allows anyone in the region to share ideas, vote, take instant polls, fill out surveys, and voice their opinions on other people’s ideas in a constructive and open environment. A site specific to our region (www.ideas.midmichigansustainability.org) was created. The Consortium as well as the members and directors of the sub-recipient Partners were invited to the MMPGS Mind Mixer. It was the first exercise with Consortium members at their kickoff event as well as the summer (June) Consortium gathering. They were assisted with getting into the Portal, to sign up for Mind Mixer and start sharing ideas of topics we should present to the public. We have created a list, based on this feedback, to create a topic schedule and uploaded the first group to the site. These topics will run for 4-6 weeks and then be replaced by new topics. The topics that get the most interaction and ideas that get the largest number of supporters will be shared more broadly. Mind Mixer will evolve over time and increasingly become something that is unique to our region.

An informational website (www.midmichigansustainability.org) will allow people to explore the region through an interactive map, links to sustainability resources, updates on the projects of this grant and several linked applications. The site will be accessible in all languages and by those with disabilities. The RFP for the website was completed and was disseminated to local firms and posted on multi-national registries.

There are several applications that will be developed in consort with the website. These may be an out-of-the box solution or a new development. A Green Review Checklist for Businesses will allow business owners to assess if they are implementing sustainable business practices. A Home Energy Checklist will help homeowners and renters explore opportunities to reduce their energy consumption and save on their utility bills. A Health Impacts Assessment Tool will help the public explore how the decisions they make, as a community, affect public health. These applications and web-based platforms will create a window in to the world of sustainability and allow consensus building on a larger scale in our region. The increased transparency and communicability of the planning process, through the portal, will lead to higher community buy-in and involvement.