



Sustainable Communities Initiative

**Orrin Williams
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Center for Urban Transformation Sustainable Communities Initiative

Achieving sustainability requires nothing less than a massive reorientation of the global economy and much of society as well over the next fifty to one hundred years, that means redesigning and rebuilding virtually everything: cities, transportation systems, cars, power plants, engines of all kinds materials, educational curricula, patterns of work and leisure, consumer expectations, and especially our pattern of handling waste... This is business-as-very-unusual. And looked at correctly, this is also the biggest business opportunity since the invention of money. This is "unplanned obsolescence" on a global scale: if virtually everything needs to be replaced, repaired, retrofitted or redesigned, that should translate to millions of jobs and billions in potential profits (and ultimately planned non-obsolescence).

Alan AtKisson (1999)

A. Currently the Center for Urban Transformation (CUT) is scouting for office space within the core community (see Section C.). Until an appropriate office space is found the CUT will operate as a virtual organization. This is a temporary situation and not a move towards the virtual corporation or office. The CUT is dedicated to community and human interaction, therefore brick and mortar is the way to go. Beside many people in the core community and for that matter globally are not "wired" and we want to develop and maintain a close relationship with the community.

The CUT has as a goal becoming, a critical organization in the design and development of healthy and sustainable communities. It is hoped that the commitment to that goal will have a major impact on the future of community development and create the impetus for the emergence of communities that meet the needs of it's settlers as well as operate in harmony with the global ecosystems. The CUT will strive to be unique by virtue of being an organization that is alive, dynamic, evolving and enlightened. By that we mean that as we become more knowledgeable about sustainable practices and the formulation of a harmonious relationship with the global ecosystems the CUT will change accordingly, advancing information and working models and practices of sustainability. This pattern of learning and ultimately change is commensurate with the Laws of the Universe and Nature of which it would bode well for the human family to reconnect with if we are to ensure a sustainable future for the continuum of the human lineage.

B. The CUT will be concentrating on organizational development tasks critical to the efficient management of the organization. Those tasks include Board development; the development of appropriate financial management systems for all levels of operation; development, fund raising and venture funding strategies; and appropriate legal and administrative structures. Legal and technical assistance are especially critical because of the enterprises that the CUT will operate in many sectors of the emerging sustainable economy.

C. **All** CUT programs and projects fall under the general category of the **Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI)**. The **Core community** for the SCI will be located on the South Side of Chicago in an area bound by Garfield Boulevard on the north; 74th Street on the south; State Street on the east; and Western Avenue on the west. The CUT will however on a collaborative basis with

other organizations and communities establish or work on projects outside of the core community, locally, nationally or globally. Currently, our principal collaborative partner is Teamwork Englewood, the lead organization for [Local Initiatives Support Corporation of Chicago](#) (LISC) and the [New Communities Program](#) (NCP).

The focus of the SCI will be in the Englewood and West Englewood community areas. The SCI is a multidisciplinary initiative that recognizes and is intimately informed by a wholistic or whole systems approach to community design and development that is concerned with sustainability efforts that are both human oriented and ecologically sustainable. The following sections are a synopsis of proposed program areas.

D. A mapping and community asset database utilizing geographical information systems (GIS) and database technologies will be developed. Partnerships with public and private institutions will be sought and developed. An example would be collaborative efforts between the CUT and the Geography Department and Neighborhood Assistance program at Chicago State University.

E. The mapping and database project by extension will lead to the creation of a community-based resource center that will be a public center with a variety of materials and mediums (multimedia) devoted to information on environmental justice; ecological design and architecture; renovation and remodeling of residential and commercial buildings; renewable energy; urban planning; organic urban agriculture, gardening and landscape; occupational and environmental health; sustainable (green) products and entrepreneurship; integrative health and nutrition and human rights, peace studies, militarism and disarmament.

An important aspect of the design and development of CUT projects and programs will be the organization of a design charette will include an array of institutional and grassroots groups within the core community. Participants in the charette others from and array of public and private institutions and will be open to the general public. People outside of the core community or those not invited to formally participate will be granted observer status in the charette process. The charette process will inform the SCI and provide a mechanism for inclusion and democratic participation. One important and fundamental aspect of the CUT program design is aligning many of our activities with the quality of life plan developed by residents of Greater Englewood through the auspices of Teamwork Englewood.

F. Sustainable economic development projects will be focused on the design and development of a grocery store and bakery named **Hearth and Soul™** (see *Hearth and Soul Grocery and Bakery Concept Paper, Sustainable Ventures Project and Community Food Environment*). Included in the plans for **Hearth and Soul** is the incorporation of a rooftop passive solar greenhouse and renewable energy systems onto the architectural design of the site selected for the

operation. This project will be a collaborative effort with numerous public and private sector individuals and institutions. This collaborative effort will assist with financial and material support for program design, development and operations. For example, the CUT will forge working relationships with organic agriculture organizations as well as entities such as the African-American and immigrant farmers in the region and the Federation of Southern Cooperative, providing opportunities to work with the expanding small and medium scale organic agricultural community as well as the at risk community of African-American and immigrant farmers. African-American farmers have experienced a precipitous drop in numbers from the millions about 100 years ago to somewhere between 1,500 and 2,000 today. The CUT is committed to working in collaboration with many communities locally, regionally, nationally and globally for food and other products for our food-based ventures as well as other Sustainable Venture Project operations.

While grocery stores are a critical component of a community's food access and security needs they are not a panacea. Rather a community requires many different venues to establish a healthy community food environment. Because of this the CUT is planning the development of a series of produce stands and markets, a farmers market and a public market

The CUT will participate in research and development efforts for the design and development of an urban agriculture component, which will apply an array of strategies and techniques to the proliferation of an urban agriculture sector. The R&D effort will apply organic principles to all projects as a standard for adoption. The urban agriculture program will utilize as stated above an array of platforms for growing food for communities, such as passive solar greenhouses (rooftop and terrestrial); hydroponic and aquaponic (combines aquaculture with hydroponic systems) facilities; and organic gardens. The aspiration is to begin and proliferate a system that provides opportunities for local communities to provide in addition to much of it's' food a vehicle for sustainable economic and community development. A large-scale system of urban agriculture has the potential to create numerous local employment opportunities right in the local community. Commercial venues can be supplied with locally produced organic vegetables, herbs and fruit as well as fish, poultry and eggs.

All food projects will expand as feasible through the long term. For example, the long-term plan is to process, package and sale on a wholesale and retail basis fair trade coffee and tea. To the extent possible these products will come from organic sources. This operation will also include nuts, seeds and spices from fair trade or local sources. These programs will attempt to encourage the proliferation of renewable energy sources and boost the export of appropriate technologies to countries of the South. For example, the CUT will work with farmers to assist in securing funding for solar coffee bean dryers. This will assist in both reducing the impact on local forests and opening markets for renewable energy technologies and the emerging ecologically sustainable economy. Community based food

processing opportunities abound; preserves, jams, and fruit butters as well as a variety of sauces and marinades can be produced in local food processing companies for regional distribution. The food processing operations will concentrate upon organic and fair-trade sources for its products.

Other sustainable venture projects will provide opportunities to sell - retail and wholesale - fair trade commodities including but not limited to arts and crafts items, clothing, textiles, and furniture and musical instruments. Sustainable ventures, which focus on the utilizing recyclable and recovered materials for resources, are being planned (for more details see Sustainable Ventures Project).

G. Within the housing sector there are plans to design and host a conference and/or lecture series on affordable housing design and architecture, which utilize energy efficiency and/or renewable energy systems in their design and affordability calculus. Long - term projects in this sector include the design of demonstration projects, which utilize alternative materials (such as straw bale and rammed earth designs) and renewable energy systems in their design.

Projects, which focus on the renovation and retrofit of existing dwellings (single family and multi-unit buildings) and where appropriate new construction will occur as large - scale efforts expanding throughout the core community. A co-housing project is of particular interest for development within the core community. The co-housing community will proceed given the emergence of a core of interested participants. All housing programs will be developed to be inclusive and diverse, with all socioeconomic and demographic categories welcome. (Also see, Sustainable Communities - Housing Sector Redevelopment Project.)

H. The CUT is convinced that renewable energy systems are critical to the design and development of healthy and sustainable communities. Critical relationships to the development of a just local and global economy that is human - oriented and ecologically sustainable is connected to the proliferation of renewable energy systems locally and globally. Because of the importance of various renewable energy technologies such as solar and wind as well as the emerging fuel cell phenomena the CUT will use to the greatest extent possible renewable energy designs and systems in its projects.

The CUT will a major advocate and proponent of renewable energy technologies of appropriate scale for urban applications. The reserves of fossil sources of energy are limited in quantity and are subject to price fluctuations that threaten the integrity of the "mainstream" economy as well as the dominant global political, social, psychological and cultural structures.

The fossil fuel conglomeration is also a major (if not the primary) source of widespread air, water and soil pollution, which negatively impact human and ecological health globally. Three examples of the impact of fossil fuel usage can

be seen in the rise of asthma rates, particularly in urban communities; the known widespread deposition of lead in the soils of urban communities and the ecological damage that accrues from oil spills from tankers and the improper disposal of oil from automobiles not only in the United States but globally. All of these examples contribute to considerable damage to the global ecosystem and have been so pervasive that if the sources of pollution were eliminated today the repair of the biosphere would require hundreds if not thousands of years for the system to return to normal. In some cases the damage may be irreparable.

The other major factor (in addition to human/public health) is the probable and incalculable impact of climate change that is likely to result from continued reliance on fossil fuels. Scenarios include the devastation and perhaps destruction of coastal and island communities and nations. The expansion of disease vectors into longitudes, latitudes and elevations where they not been seen before; the increase of destructive weather phenomena such as hurricanes, blizzards and large scale rain events and disruption of the already fragile global hydrological system which would contribute to global instability. The instability would accentuate and proliferate ethnic, sectarian and national warfare and violence, most of which disrupts and displaces civilian populations. These considerations and others reinforce organizational and institutional advocacy goals of the CUT and shapes its' policies and programs.

The commitment to the design and development of sustainable communities of mixed income is critical. A primary concern is the development of affordable housing units. The CUT will utilize innovative land acquisition strategies that include land trust and eminent domain instruments to acquire land in an effort to break the traditional cycle of community development in the United States that in the main excludes and eliminates the poor and people of color from the community development process and outcomes. The goal is to design sustainable communities that are desirable for a range of people across various social, cultural and economic strata.