



# **ALBANY COUNTY SUSTAINABILITY POLICY**

October 2014

Albany County Executive Daniel P. McCoy

The following document outlines the rules and guidelines to be applied and enforced by all County of Albany departments related to consumption, conservation, sustainability and waste reduction. It has become a priority of the Albany County Executive, the Albany County Legislature and many employees to make Albany County facilities and its workforce among the most efficient, cost effective and environmentally-considerate county governments in New York State. This policy will be the first step in achieving this goal and its benefits go far beyond the financial savings and extend into a healthier environment for our surroundings, our employees, and our County as a whole. This effort will not be completed overnight. It will be an ongoing process for many years to come, but the adoption and adherence to this policy is a crucial step in that process. Our successful example will serve as a model for local municipalities and private entities throughout Albany County and the Capital Region.

## **Definitions:**

***“Recycling”*** means the process of collecting, sorting, cleansing, treating, and reconstituting materials that would otherwise become solid waste, and returning them to the economic mainstream in the form of raw material for new, reused, or reconstituted products that meet the quality standards necessary to be used in the marketplace.

***“Waste Prevention”*** means any action undertaken by an individual or organization to eliminate or reduce the amount or toxicity of materials before they enter the municipal solid waste stream. This action is intended to conserve resources, promote efficiency, and reduce pollution.

***“Practicable”*** means sufficient in performance and not unreasonably expensive.

***“Environmentally Preferable Products”*** means products that have a less negative impact on human health and the environment when compared with competing products. This comparison may consider raw materials acquisition, production, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, reuse, operation, and/or disposal of the product.

***“Green Washing”*** the act of misleading consumers regarding the environmental practices of a company or the environmental benefits of a product or service.

***“Recycled Products”*** are products manufactured with waste material that has been recovered or diverted from the waste stream. Recycled material may be derived from post-consumer waste (material that has served its intended end-use and been discarded by a final consumer), industrial scrap, manufacturing waste, and/or other waste that otherwise would not have been utilized.

- ***“Post-consumer recovered materials.”*** A finished material that would normally be disposed of as a solid waste, having completed its life cycle as a consumer item. Examples of post-consumer recovered materials include, but are not limited to: old newspapers, office paper, yard waste, steel and/or aluminum cans, glass, plastic bottles, oil, asphalt, concrete, and tires.

- ***“Pre-consumer recovered materials.”*** Material or by-products generated after manufacturing of a product is completed, but before the product reaches the end-use consumer. Examples of pre-consumer recovered materials include, but are not limited to: obsolete inventories of finished goods, rejected unused stock and paper wastes generated during printing, cutting and other converting operations.
- ***“Total recovered material.”*** The total pre- and post-consumer recovered material contained in a product.

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### **Employee Training:**

All employees hired after the adoption of this policy will be instructed to follow these rules and guidelines during their pre-employment orientation. Upon completion of the hiring process they will be provided a copy of this policy for future reference. Furthermore, this policy should be posted and available in all departments. All current and future employees will be trained to identify and avoid Green Washing with appropriate reminders, powerpoints and literature.

### **Energy Consumption and Reduction:**

All employees will be expected to reduce their consumption of energy through reasonable means. This includes, but is not limited to, simple steps such as turning off office lights and extends to the minimization of idling county vehicles. Fuel and electricity are major costs for the county with all departments and any savings that can be realized is a benefit not only to the county as a whole, but each department individually. The specific goal is to reduce electricity usage by 15% by 2015 and continue reducing consumption with each year after.

Great attention should be given to equipment acquisition with the aim of obtaining the next generation of efficient appliances. The various machines and systems currently in use throughout the county for tasks such as copying, faxing, scanning and printing should be consolidated into single appliances whenever feasible. Departments are directed to notify the appropriate authorities within the county when inefficiency is identified, even if that inefficiency is switching a light bulb to a compact florescent bulb or new printer. New vehicles should be purchased not only to upgrade the fleet, but also for the purpose of improving the overall efficiency of the fleet. Preferential parking will be designated for approved hybrid or electric vehicles. Our objective should be to purchase no less than 1/3 'green' vehicles when purchasing is carried out.

### **Waste and Consumption Reduction:**

In order to reduce overall consumption and spending on paper, the default setting on all printers and copiers should be double sided printing. This default setting will not prevent employees from overriding the default setting and printing single sided when required. However, paper consumption should be minimized whenever possible and the electronic transfer of documents should be encouraged instead of sending hard copies or faxing.

A wholesale examination of Albany County subscriptions and mail should be completed with the goal of reducing expenditures and eliminating duplication of hard copy documents. This study should be expanded to include an inspection of County purchasing practices of disposable goods. Reusable or refillable products should be purchased whenever possible and the use of reusable containers by employees should be encouraged.

## **Waste Diversion and Reduction Task Force:**

Related to the matter of waste and consumption reduction, a task force will be assembled to make recommendations to County departments on how they can improve. This function will be assigned to the Albany County Department of General Services (DGS) and supported by the Commissioner of the Department of Management and Budget (DMB). Each County department will be required to appoint one “Sustainability Coordinator” to ensure maximum participation in this *County Sustainability Policy*. The collective group of these appointed department representatives will be the “Green Task Force” and will be chaired by the Commissioner of DGS. The purpose and goal of this task force will be to encourage cost-effective waste diversion and reduction strategies, monitor progress, identify and resolve related problems, and make recommendations as appropriate. Furthermore, the task force will be responsible for an assessment of County energy use and needs and will develop an energy or climate plan. The task force will be required to meet no less than four times per year and the Chair, or a designated representative, will report to the County Legislature, or a duly designated committee, no less than 4 times (quarterly) a year regarding implementation of this policy and the county’s progress in implementation.

**Paperless Sub-Committee:** In an effort to reduce our impact on the environment and shift expenditures away from paper consumption, electronic based information should be utilized whenever possible by each department within the County. The County should move to make paper based systems and processes paperless through the use of modern technologies such as PC, Tablet, Smart Scanners and Smart Phones. In order to facilitate moving to a paperless system, each department should assign one employee (ideally the Green Educator described later) to act as a member of a “Paperless Task Force” which would be comprised of members from each department each contributing to the overarching goal of moving the county offices and the legislature to a functioning and sustainable paperless system. The “Paperless Sub-Committee” would act as a sub-committee and meet at the same time as the aforementioned “Green Task Force.”

## **Procurement Guidelines:**

County departments and employees should make every effort to procure materials, products or services in a manner that integrates fiscal responsibility, and community and environmental stewardship as defined by New York State. The following factors should be considered during any and all instances of procurement. The Procurement Division will be responsible for their consideration:

1. **Sustainability Factors:** Environmental factors to be considered include, but are not limited to: Pollutant releases; Toxicity (such as persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT) chemicals, etc); Waste generation; Greenhouse gas emissions; Energy consumption; Depletion of natural resources; and Human health impacts.

All Departments are directed to review purchasing specifications and contract requirements with the goal of revisions that will encourage the use of recycled products. Consideration should be given to the ability of products and/or their packaging to be reused, reconditioned, or recycled. Similarly, the purchase or lease of capital equipment which is compatible with the use of products containing recycled materials should be a priority.

In the future, County policy will be to make every effort to purchase products which are recyclable, reusable or contain recycled materials whenever feasible. For example, departments must make every effort to use recycled paper for their masthead stationery, envelopes, and business cards where cost effective. When recycled products are purchased, vendors should make reasonable efforts to label such products.

2. **Toxins in products and services:** County employees are directed to make attempts at evaluating the comparative toxicity of products and services, and consider the threat of harm to human health and the environment in their decision-making.

Departments should make every effort to purchase products which minimize waste and toxic by-products during their manufacture, use, disposal and recycle.

3. **Fiscal Factors:** Fiscal factors to be considered in determining cost effectiveness include, but are not limited to: (1) Use reduction; buy only what you really need; (2) Product performance and quality; (3) Life-cycle cost assessment; lowest total cost; (4) Leveraging buying power; (5) Impact on staff time and labor; and (6) Long-term financial/market changes.

Recycled products should be made a priority for purchase if the quality is equal to un-recycled products, including a price preference not to exceed 10% over the lowest price quoted by suppliers of comparable non-recycled products. This 10% price preference may be granted only if the fitness and quality of recycled products are at least equal to un-recycled products. When making price comparisons for products life cycle cost should be a major consideration when applicable.

In consideration for the environment, all procurement of paper products by the County offices should strive to seek items that are described as being made up of at minimum 30% Pre- and/or Post-consumer recovered materials; this should especially be considered for copy paper purchases.

4. **Use of Best Practices:** County employees will utilize best practices in sustainable procurement as they evolve. As applied to this policy, best practices in sustainable procurement are those that utilize leading edge sustainability factors, standards, and procedures in an efficient and effective way that is successful and replicable. The Purchasing Division will be responsible for periodically checking on the changes and updates related to best practices.

### **Enabling Practicable Habits:**

Motivation for employee recycling can come in many forms. Incentives can be issued to an entire group or individuals. For example, employees who have taken the initiative to consistently remind their co-workers to recycle or has directly exercised sustainable practices through recycling could be rewarded for their efforts. An award could be issued either monthly, quarterly or annually. An example of incentivizing a group would include friendly challenges issued amongst the county offices. An example would be a month long soda can drive, with the proceeds going either directly to a charity or perhaps to a small office party for the winning group.

## Enabling Actions:

- 1. Incentivized Sustainable Practices:** Departments should make efforts to incentivize sustainable practices among County employees with the potential to boost morale, save money and, most importantly, encourage employees to make practicable and sustainable decisions. Challenges could include, but would not be limited to, electronic drives, bottle and can drives, tab and cap drives, “dark” drives (which office uses the least amount of electricity), etc. Individual incentives and friendly County-wide challenges would be issued either by the Green Task Force or the County Executive. Based on the results of the challenges, the individual employee who donated the greatest number of collected goods, took extra steps to ensure sustainable practices were in use, or showed outstanding ‘green’ initiative in any other way would be granted preferred parking as the Green Employee of the quarter. All potential incentives must first be vetted by the Department of Law to ensure they are consistent with regulation.
- 2. Long-Term Incentives:** For employees who consistently show outstanding efforts in sustainable practices such as winning the Green Employee award multiple times, another award can be issued at the discretion of the County Executive and/or Green Task Force. Offering this long-term award encourages employees to continue to strive for sustainable practices.
- 3. Community activism:** In each county office a bulletin board will be placed on display for both employees and the public. This bulletin board will include friendly reminders and tips on ‘green’ practices, sustainable living, volunteer opportunities and possibly updates on any ‘green’ challenges in progress. Ideally these would be hung in the main waiting area of each office and updated regularly by the office secretary and other office contributors.
- 4. Cigarette Receptacles:** In terms of environmental health, cigarettes are considered to be a hazard. The placement and use of cigarette receptacles outside of county office buildings would benefit both the people outside and the local environment. The reduction of discarded cigarettes has been linked with the reduction of second hand smoke. Discarded cigarettes are known to have negative impacts on the environment as well. The mandatory addition and use of cigarette receptacles outside of County offices is a simple way to benefit both the environment and employee health.
- 5. Green Educator:** For each County Department, one employee should be designated the “Green Educator.” This employee would be responsible for ensuring the continued implementation of all protocols issued within this document. Along with the aforementioned guidelines, the Educator would be responsible for contributing to the office community’s awareness of other environmental issues beyond the workplace. This might include, but is not limited to, implementing an adopt-a-species raffle, volunteer pond clean-ups, a green update on AlcoNet and implementation of other green initiatives to benefit the County offices.

6. **Green Washing Avoidance:** Considered a major issue amongst environmentalists in today's society, Green Washing, as defined previously, has the potential to dramatically decrease the impact of all sustainable efforts undertaken. In order to avoid Green Washing, employees need to know what and when to look for it. This can only be done by making PPTs, literature and other informative sources available to employees. Reminders and required short literature should be available to employees forewarning of the negative impacts Green Washing can have. An excellent source for more information can be obtained online at: <http://sinsofgreenwashing.org/findings/the-seven-sins/index.html>

### **Adopt-a-Roadside:**

As a show of good faith and setting a good example, the County will contribute to the AAR program by adopting a roadside segment. An employee of each department will be assigned the responsibility of encouraging volunteers from their department to assist in cleaning the roadside each quarter. This adoption of a roadside segment by the County will continue as long as the program is run through the County (rather than the standard two year contract).

### **Capital Projects/Building:**

All new construction projects undertaken by the County should be developed with the goal of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. LEED certification provides independent, third-party verification that a building, home or community was designed and built using strategies aimed at achieving high performance in key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality. Factors to consider will include, but not be limited to:

1. Sustainable Sites
2. Water Efficiency
3. Energy and Atmosphere
4. Material and Resources
5. Indoor Environmental Quality
6. Innovation in Design
7. Regional Priority
8. Storm Water Reduction and Control

County facility projects affected by this policy include new buildings, renovations, and adaptive re-use of an existing facility, whether owned or leased. During negotiations for leased buildings and space, administration will strive for LEED Existing Buildings Operations and Maintenance (EBOM) and/or LEED Commercial Interiors (CI) as appropriate. Historical buildings are expected to be as green as possible without impacting the historical fabric of the structure. Furthermore, recognizing the need to both mitigate and plan for the consequences of climate change, future facility projects will be designed to be as efficient as possible in energy and potable water consumption. The County will continue to reduce water consumption in existing buildings and landscaping to ensure that new buildings do not increase the net potable water demand of County operations and facilities.

**LEED Requirements:**

The LEED program has four levels of green building performance (Certified, Silver, Gold, and Platinum) which apply to different kinds of projects, such as commercial new construction, commercial interiors, core and shell and existing buildings.

The United State Green Building Council (USGBC) updates the LEED guidelines and adds new categories of buildings on a regular basis. LEED requirements will evolve and become increasingly stringent. This policy requires that buildings meet LEED Silver using guidelines that are current at the time the design is approved.

**The following requirements shall be met for new buildings:**

- A. New buildings over 5,000 SF will be designed and constructed to meet LEED Silver standards.
- B. Buildings between 5,000 and 25,000 SF can meet these requirements by having the building design and the LEED checklist reviewed by a LEED Accredited Professional (AP) or LEED Green Associate who is also a registered engineer or architect and has previously worked on a minimum of one LEED certified building. This LEED AP may be an employee of the County or the architectural firm, but should not be associated with the project that is under review.
- C. Requirements for buildings over 25,000 SF shall be met by registering and officially certifying the building with the USGBC. Capital Projects are encouraged to strive for higher than Silver standards when possible.
- D. Alternative Means of achieving a green building are acceptable according to the same standards as required of private developers in the Green Building Ordinance.
- E. Capital Project Managers may submit a request for exemption to the County Executive. A list of energy and water efficiency measures, waste reduction actions and other green building features shall be submitted at the time of the exemption request. It is expected that exempted buildings be designed and constructed to reach as high a green standard as practicable for that building type. Specific building types that are exempt from the Green Building Ordinance are automatically exempt from this policy.
- F. To the extent that is practicable, each new building shall not increase the overall potable water demand of the County. County water use will be tracked and savings from water conservation projects may be used to offset any increased demand caused by the new building.
- G. New County owned buildings will be designed to control storm water runoff in accordance with the requirements and procedures set forth in the Santa Clara Valley Urban Runoff Pollution Prevention Program.
- H. County-owned residential buildings of any kind may use GreenPoint Rated Guidelines instead of LEED. In this case, the buildings should meet or exceed the minimum requirements for similar buildings as covered by the Green Building Ordinance.
- I. Within a reasonable distance of existing or planned recycled water infrastructure, new buildings shall be plumbed and landscaping shall be planned to utilize recycled water.

- J. The design of new facilities and parking lots shall consider the incorporation of renewable energy systems to the maximum extent practicable, e.g. fuel cells, photovoltaic arrays and solar hot water. Provided the systems are economically feasible, project managers will incorporate renewable energy systems into the project. If the budget for the renewable energy systems is not specifically approved as part of the project, project managers will at a minimum include the installation of wiring and plumbing conduits to allow easy installation of renewable systems at a later time.
- K. Capital project managers shall program budget and time for building operations and maintenance personnel to participate in the design and development phases to ensure optimal operations and maintenance of the building. Designers will be required to specify materials and systems that simplify and reduce maintenance requirements; require less water, energy, and toxic chemicals and cleaners to maintain; efficiently remove collected trash and recycling; and are cost-effective and reduce life-cycle costs.
- L. All new staff parking areas should offer preferential parking for carpools, provide sufficient bicycle lockers and have electric recharging stations available if electrical service is available. The design of the building shall consider options that will reduce greenhouse gas impacts related to commuting and client travel to the facility and encourage alternative commute choices.

**The following requirements shall be met for retrofits, remodels and renovations:**

- M. The same standards will be applied to each County building retrofit, remodel and renovation project as are required of private sector projects.
- N. Energy and water efficiency upgrades and the potential for utilizing recycled water shall be considered in any renovation project greater than 5000 sf.

**The following requirements apply to all building projects, regardless of size:**

- O. Green building expertise will be a criterion in selecting architectural and engineering firms. This may be shown through direct experience designing green buildings that meet LEED standards and familiarity with the certification process.
- P. The construction design for each new building will include installation of individual power meters that are compatible with and can be incorporated into the Building Operations Enterprise Energy Management System for energy data collection, analysis and building energy management. Additional meters will be included in the facility and on site, as necessary, to track the progress of sustainability initiatives, including reductions in energy and water use and waste generation.
- Q. Building materials that support the greenhouse gas emissions goals of the County and support good indoor air quality shall be identified and to the greatest extent practicable shall be utilized in building projects. Products that have significant impacts on greenhouse gas emissions or indoor air quality shall be identified and avoided, used minimally or mitigated to the greatest extent possible.
- R. To the extent possible, buildings should be designed for passive survivability, which allows them to be utilized in the event of a disaster that may make one or more systems or public utility inoperable.

## **Operation and Maintenance**

The County shall establish a LEED for Existing Buildings Operations and Maintenance (LEED EBOM) Initiative to integrate a green building approach into ongoing maintenance and to guide the County's efforts in making buildings more energy and water efficient, more environmentally friendly and healthier for visitors and employees.

## **Commercial Interiors**

LEED for Commercial Interiors (LEED CI) is the green benchmark for the tenant improvement market. It is the recognized system for certifying high-performance green interiors that are healthy, productive places to work; are less costly to operate and maintain; and have a reduced environmental footprint. LEED for Commercial Interiors gives the power to make sustainable choices to tenants and designers, who do not always have control over whole building operations.

The County will strive to achieve a LEED Silver for commercial interior installation in leased space, as practicable. Length of lease, size of project and County's potential operational and utility costs will be considered to determine practicability.

## **Education**

The County shall support and/or provide green building training to project managers, maintenance or facility managers and all members of any design team for new buildings and shall encourage ongoing participation in green building professional organizations, conferences, trainings and other opportunities in order to expand expertise in green building, energy and water efficiency and innovative approaches to addressing environmental issues within facilities and operations.

While not all factors will be incorporated into every purchase, it is the intent of this policy that County employees will make a good faith effort to incorporate and balance these factors to the maximum extent possible.

## Appendix A

<b>LIST OF RECYCLED PRODUCTS</b>		
<b>PLASTIC</b>	<b>PAPER</b>	<b>RUBBER</b>
Carpet	Business cards	Dock bumpers
Construction wall covering	Computer paper	Floor tiles
Corrugated drain pipe	Copier paper	Retread tires
Culverts	Corrugated boxes	Rubberized asphalt
Curbside recycling containers	Cover stock	Trailer bumpers
Dollies	Envelopes	Wheel chocks
Fence posts		
Fire engine cab mats	Legal pads	<b>Other materials</b>
Garbage can liners	Letterhead	Acoustic ceiling tiles
Ice scrapers	Linerboard	Cellulose fiber insulation
Indoor/outdoor furniture	Loose-fill packaging	Compost
Landfill caps & liners	Mailing tubes	Fly ash/concrete mixtures
Locker room benches	Napkins	Glassphalt
Lumber	Newsprint	Reflective road striping
Pallets	Offset	Re-refined lubricating oil
Parking bumpers	Padded mail bags	Road signs
Plastic bags	Paper towels	Roofing shingles
Playground equipment	Poster board	
Refuse carts	Toilet tissue	
Shower dividers	Typing paper	
Speed bumps		
Toiler partitions		

\*List from Resolution 411 of 2010