CITY OF
AUBURN
WASHINGTON

Peter B. Lewis, Mayor

25 West Main Street * Auburn WA 98001-4998 * www.auburnwa.gov * 253-931-3000

December 9, 2009

King County Solid Waste Division
201 S. Jackson St., Suite 701
Seattle, WA 98104

Attention: Ms. Diane Yates
Intergovernmental Liaison
Director's Office

Subject: Draft Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan (CSWMP) - November 20, 2009 – Joint MSWMAC & SWAC Meeting

Dear Diane,

In the course of the subject CSWMP review and discussion, I brought up the topic of "sustainability" and the need to include the concept of sustainability into the appropriate area of the CSWMP.

I advised the group that the National League of Cities (NLC), which I'm a member of the Energy, Environment and Natural Resources (EENR) Steering Committee had done significant research and planning on the subject of "Sustainability".

I promised Director Kevin Kiernan that I would search through my files and share the enclosed NLC/EENR product and data that NLC promotes. Should you have any questions, please contact me at 253-261-3235.

Sincerely,

Bill Peloza
Councilmember
MSWMAC Representative
City of Auburn

Enclosures

Cc: Joan Clark
Councilmember Wagner
Mayor Lewis

2.00 Environmental Quality

A. Problem

Environmental degradation respects no political boundaries; therefore a coordinated national environmental quality policy is vital to our nation. Without such a policy, no city or town can accomplish the most basic goals of protecting the health, welfare, and safety of its citizens.

B. Goals

A national environmental quality policy must:

- Improve the quality of the total environment while protecting the environment from further degradation; and
- Assess both current and long term environmental impacts, ensuring that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

C. Federal Policy

1. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

NLC believes that NEPA has encouraged the federal government to consider alternatives and mitigation options to proposed federal projects, and that the implementation of NEPA supports NLC's goals of environmental quality.

To reduce unnecessary project delays, NLC urges the federal government, in cooperation with local elected officials, to improve the NEPA process. NLC believes any attempts to improve NEPA must also:

- Mandate concurrent reviews among all federal agencies involved in the NEPA process for a project;
- Develop clearly defined procedures for resolving disputes among those federal agencies;
- Eliminate duplicative reviews by substituting more stringent or equal state environmental reviews for the federal review process;
- Require all agencies to determine appropriate time frames to complete their reviews, and penalize agencies that do not meet the deadlines; and
- Ensure adequate opportunity for public involvement.

To encourage public participation, NLC also recommends that NEPA documents include glossaries, bylines and phone numbers of the federal officials responsible for each document.

2. Federal Mandates

To meet national environmental quality goals, NLC recognizes that federal mandates are necessary. Where federal standards are established, the federal government must assure local government adequate capacity, resources, and time to achieve those standards. In addition, the federal government should renew its financial partnership to assist municipalities in complying with these mandates. Moreover, local governments must have the flexibility to determine their own methods to achieve federal mandates.

D. Principles

1. Regional Approaches

The impact of federal environmental programs must be evaluated in terms of the total environment, and coordinated with local and area wide planning efforts. Regional approaches to resolve environmental issues that cross-jurisdictional boundaries should be encouraged.

2. Sustainability

NLC is committed to the concept of sustainability, that as a society we must find ways to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This is especially significant when considering the environment and natural resources. From a municipal perspective, protecting and rebuilding existing communities are vital components of a national environmental protection program. Vast amounts of natural resources already have been committed to and by urban communities. Restoring and strengthening existing communities contributes toward ensuring a sustainable future.

3. Climate Change

The National League of Cities believes that the solution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions lies in balancing a commitment to conserving energy, protecting the environment, developing new technologies, and strengthening the economy.

4. Environmental Justice

Recent studies have suggested that the impacts of pollution fall disproportionately on poor and minority communities, an issue of special concern to the nation's cities and towns.

To mitigate these unacceptable impacts, NLC supports federal legislation that would require the Environmental Protection Agency to:

- Identify those areas with the largest concentrations of toxic chemicals in air, land, and water;
- Assess the human health in the areas of highest impact;
- Provide opportunities and resources that will allow them to participate in determining adverse health effects and economic impacts;

DRAFT POLICY BRIEF
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

"In cities across America, environmental issues aren't trendy; they are fundamental realities that alter the health, economic viability and growth of communities. Local governments are not waiting for federal action; instead they are creating new and innovative programs to address their specific communities."

--NLC President Cynthia McCollum, Council Member, Madison, AL

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is a defining issue of our time, representing the broad notion that all activities should take into account implications for people and the environment—our actions must meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. As a concept, it is rapidly capturing the attention of all sectors of society, and the nation's local governments find themselves at the epicenter of the movement.

Cities and towns have always been great innovators; they have to be. While federal and state actions may take years, citizens demand answers more rapidly from their local elected officials. Cities and towns across the country are addressing sustainability issues and are actively pursuing initiatives to "go green," conserve energy, and reduce carbon emissions. The federal government can and should be a full partner in these efforts, providing national leadership when appropriate, and supporting the many creative efforts that can only happen at the community level.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

"Sustainability" can be defined to include any number of topics, and all decisions a city makes can be viewed through this prism. As a practical matter, cities find that sustainability involves the intersection of a wide array of issue areas, including energy and the environment, transportation, and land use and development.

A variety of challenges have brought increased attention and timeliness to sustainability, including the threat of climate change, rising energy prices, and the depletion of natural resources. Record oil and energy prices are affecting municipal budgets, in addition to the budgets of residents and businesses. Climate change is reported to be causing severe challenges to the country already, from draughts and wildfires, to floods and heat waves.

Conversely, the *opportunities* are great. Acting in a sustainable fashion can result in multiple, significant benefits to individuals, communities, and the country, including:

- Environmental protection – conserving energy and natural resources, promoting renewable sources of energy, creating and preserving green spaces, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions are environmentally sound practices;

- Economic growth and stability – creating jobs and careers in "green" sectors of the economy will help stimulate the economy; saving money in this era of tight municipal and household budgets makes the business case for sustainability;

- Public health – biking and walking paths encourage exercise and can help combat the obesity epidemic; improved indoor and outdoor air quality can decrease the rate of asthma; and

- National security – decreasing dependence on foreign oil will better position the U.S. to handle natural or national disasters.

The nation's local elected officials are in a unique position to provide a comprehensive perspective on these issues, as key decision-makers with a responsibility for representing all constituencies, and at a level of government where effects are felt and change can be implemented immediately. Local elected leaders see every day how important sustainability is to the health and quality of life in their communities, both now and in the future. As stewards of their communities, city leaders are using their bully pulpits to raise the visibility of global warming and climate change and to shine a spotlight on the everyday actions citizens can take to "go green."

In many cases, the sustainable actions city leaders are taking – using energy-efficient light bulbs, changing to hybrid vehicles in city fleets, enhancing recycling programs, retrofitting municipal buildings – save taxpayers dollars, in addition to help the environment. Without a doubt, the economic benefits of committing to sustainability strategies and behaviors far out weigh the environmental and social risks of inaction.

While some cities are leading the way already, many more understand the potential benefits and are ready and willing to take action. In a November 2007 survey of cities, 61 percent said they are taking steps related to sustainability planning and "green" initiatives and plan to do more. Combined with those cities that are considering taking action but still formulating clear action plans, the total number rises to 83 percent.

Clearly, sustainability has become a mainstream concern and priority at the local level. The efforts by America's cities on sustainability are echoed by many sectors of American society, including county and state governments, the business sector, the academic and scientific communities, and countless other individual and organizational initiatives, which together represent a mounting consensus on the need for action.

The federal government has displayed an increasing interest in sustainability issues, as well. In 2007, the federal government enacted law that authorized $2 billion annually for the promising

new Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program. The program would provide grants to cities, counties, and states for innovative practices designed to achieve greater energy efficiency and lower energy usage. These grants would fund local initiatives, including building and home energy conservation programs, energy audits, fuel conservation programs, building retrofits to increase energy efficiency, "smart growth" planning and zoning and alternative energy programs.

In 2008, the Senate began, but did not complete, consideration of a comprehensive climate change proposal, the Lieberman-Warner Climate Security Act, that includes funding for the new block grant program; establishes a cap-and-trade system designed to gradually reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions by set timeframes; funding to support the expansion of mass transit; and tax relief for the energy needs of low-income consumers.

THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEW PARTNERSHIP

To move our country toward greater energy independence and security, increasing the production of clean renewable fuels, and increasing the energy efficiency of products, buildings, and vehicles, local governments are prepared to partner with the federal government.

CORE PRINCIPLES

Avoid Unfunded Mandates: The federal government should avoid policies that impose disproportionate responsibilities on local governments or increased financial liability without recognizing the fiscal impact of those policies. In particular, federal polices should not mandate new costs for local governments without providing adequate funds to reimburse local governments for these new mandates.

Preserve Local Authority: Activities such as franchising, zoning, issuing permits and licenses, local code development, and managing employment relationships are fundamental responsibilities of local governments. Federal policies should not undermine these activities or preempt local authority to protect the health, safety and welfare of local residents. Furthermore, preemptive policies constrain the ability of local elected officials to tailor policies to local needs and demands.

Protect and Strengthen the Intergovernmental Partnership: The intergovernmental partnership must be strengthened to provide a framework of economic growth that balances the critical role of each level of government in the economic health of the nation, while also preserving important principles of federalism.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

To foster a more sustainable future for future generations, NLC recommends the following:

- Support a comprehensive emissions reduction plan that includes establishment of a national greenhouse gas registry and a cap on total emissions;

- Pursue a responsible energy policy strategy that promotes the most efficient and affordable use of all sources, promotes renewable sources, encourages domestic production, protects the environment, decreases greenhouse gas emissions, and encourages efficiency and conservation;

- Support a multimodal transportation system that encourages mass transit, passenger rail, and non-motorized transportation, and the development of alternative fuels and low emission vehicles; and

- Appropriate funds for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant program.

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The time for change and action is now. How cities implement sustainable or "smart growth" principles varies widely, but the decision to do so is not dependent on whether the community is rural or urban, small or large. Cities of all sizes and demographics have realized the importance and benefits of creating sustainable communities.

At the federal government level, ambitious efforts are underway to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, reduce greenhouse gases and become energy independent. Through federal transportation, tax, and energy policy, the federal government can set the framework for individual community solutions to creating sustainable communities and a sustainable future. Through such a partnership, together we can achieve a sustainable future for our nation, our cities, and our citizens.

"NLC can be a leader on this issue by...promoting ideas that are working."
--NLC Board Member, Debbie Quinn, Council Member, Fairhope, AL.