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## BEST PRACTICE AREA 15: INNOVATIVE OPPORTUNITIES

### Vision

The Joint Planning District encourages innovation and takes advantage of innovative opportunities to move toward sustainability as they arise.

### Background

Innovation and creativity are important ways to ensure ongoing progress toward sustainability. In addition, because of the interconnectedness between the various areas of sustainability, innovation by merging the understanding of various disciplines and areas of best practice will be needed. The goals in this best practice area are intended to build connections between various experts in the Joint Planning District and promote the efforts of those active in sustainability initiatives.

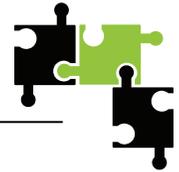
### Goals

- A. Act as a means to facilitate connections in the community that will support innovation in sustainable initiatives.
- B. Establish a forum to champion and recognize sustainability efforts, allow for active community engagement, gather feedback, and facilitate participation in the development and implementation of local sustainability efforts.
- C. Engage key business and organizations who are leaders in sustainability to promote and expand their efforts and to provide support to other businesses and organizations to move toward sustainability.
- D. Engage members of agricultural community who are leaders in sustainability to promote and expand their efforts (e.g. local foods, local energy, land stewardship) and to provide support to others in the agricultural community in moving toward sustainability.
- E. Leverage the partnership with sister cities to bring in additional ideas for sustainability initiatives.
- F. Implement a marketing/outreach campaign to ensure that the majority of the Joint Planning District community is aware of and active in sustainability initiatives.

### Initiatives and Action Steps

The following three initiatives for initial action were identified through public input and reflect local stakeholders' views of which goals would have the most profound effect on moving the Joint Planning District toward sustainability. The three identified initiatives are





intended to build and recognize the connections in the community that will lead to innovation.

1. **Promote Awareness and Understanding:** Establish a forum to champion sustainability efforts, allow for active community engagement, gather feedback, and facilitate participation in the development and implementation of local sustainability efforts.
  - a. Implement actions identified in BPA 12: Sustainability Education to establish a shared understanding of sustainability throughout the Joint Planning District.
  - b. Continue to encourage a diverse range of participants in the Sustainability Committee (Committee members are from a number of Cities and townships in the Joint Planning District and represent various viewpoints such as renewable energy, utilities, municipalities, builders, environmental groups, community organizations, colleges and universities, etc.).
  - c. Establish a website and blog to promote and catalogue Joint Planning District sustainability efforts and to encourage feedback and participation.
  - d. Leverage partnerships with local organizations, businesses, colleges, universities and community groups to promote specific sustainability initiatives through a number of venues.
  
2. **Planning and Encouragement:** Act as a means to facilitate connections in the community that will plan for and support innovation in sustainable initiatives.
  - a. Hold an annual sustainability brainstorming or networking meeting to encourage the involvement of the community and facilitate connections that will assist community members in implementing their sustainability-related ideas.
  - b. Work with the St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce to engage local businesses in sustainability and support their efforts.
  - c. Establish community-based sustainability teams to plan, promote, and implement sustainability efforts in their community.
  - d. Establish a local foods and sustainable agriculture working group to promote and support the activities of the Joint Planning District agricultural community.
  
3. **Recognition and Assessment:** Establish a forum to recognize and evaluate sustainability efforts.
  - a. Implement actions identified in BPA 12: Sustainability Education to hold an annual celebration with awards for sustainable actions.





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- b. Provide additional recognition for particularly innovative and sustainable organizations and companies in the Joint Planning District through awards, tours, or other promotions.
  - c. Provide ongoing review and assessment of sustainability efforts throughout the Joint Planning District through the Sustainability Committee. The Sustainability Committee will follow progress on sustainability initiatives led by the Joint Planning District and the cities, townships and counties that make up the Planning District. In addition, the Committee will periodically check in on progress toward sustainability in the organizations, colleges, universities, and groups in the Joint Planning District, particularly those represented on the Committee and will solicit input from the community at large on their actions.

### **General Actions**

The following general actions have been identified as measures that will allow the Joint Planning District to move toward the goals for this Best Practice Area that were not selected as “initiatives” above.

- I. Schedule learning sessions and/or visits with sister cities to discover new ideas for sustainability initiatives and techniques to implement in the Joint Planning District.
- II. Government and educational facilities and operations implement innovative products and programs as demonstration projects or case studies.
- III. Promote innovation in the community through inventor’s contests.

