

10. Energy Conservation

In an era marked by a heightened awareness of finite natural resources, there is a continuing need for energy conservation to reduce costs, decrease dependency on foreign energy sources, minimize the environmental effects of consumption, and conserve resources for future generations. Given the age of Cumberland's building stock, energy conservation is a particularly effective way of reducing living costs and the cost of government operations, thus contributing to the vitality of the local economy. The City of Cumberland has carried out a number of initiatives to reduce energy consumption in governmental operations over the years.

The local electricity provider, Allegany Power, has actively promoted energy conservation among Cumberland residents as a means of forestalling the need for construction of an additional power plant. The City has cooperated with Allegany Power and Columbia Gas of Maryland to promote awareness of the need for energy conservation by periodically mailing informational materials with water utility bills.

Heating costs can be a special burden on low and moderate income residents, particularly those inhabiting buildings without proper weatherproofing. The Allegany County Human Resources Development Commission (HRDC) provides energy-related funding to low income residents through two state-funded programs:

- the Weatherization Assistance Program, which provides funding for physical improvements to houses to increase energy efficiency; and
- the Maryland Energy Assistance Program, which provides funding to defray utility expenses during winter months.

The City's Department of Community Development and the private, non-profit Cumberland Neighborhood Housing Services also provide weatherization assistance to homeowners through housing rehabilitation programs.

Issue:

- As noted, energy conservation is an effective means of reducing environmental impacts and achieving economic benefits at the same time. As such, it is an important component of sustainability and should be considered in developing a sustainable development strategy for the City.

Goals, Objectives, and Actions (Energy Conservation)

Goal 9

Conserve energy and promote public awareness of energy issues.

Objective 9.1

Promote the use of energy conservation techniques in the City.

Action 9.1.1

Continue to work with Allegany Power and Columbia Gas of Maryland to educate the public about the importance of energy conservation and to promote use of techniques to reduce consumption.

Action 9.1.2

Evaluate the Building Code and update as appropriate to incorporate current energy conservation standards for new construction and major building renovations.

Action 9.1.3

Support the Allegany County HRDC's Weatherization Program, which provides assistance for physical improvements to residents to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy costs.

Action 9.1.4

Provide weatherization assistance to low and moderate income property owners through housing assistance programs.

Action 9.1.5

Consider the role of energy conservation and possible use of alternative energy sources as part of the sustainable economic development strategy (see Action 8.1.1).

Objective 9.2

Conserve energy in City operations.

Action 9.2.1

Continue to identify and implement strategies to reduce municipal energy use, for example:

- adjusting heating, ventilating, air conditioning, and lighting equipment to conserve energy;
- modifying buildings to include proper insulation, glazing, weatherstripping, and other improvements to increase energy efficiency;
- reducing fuel consumption by the municipal fleet through measures such as the use of energy efficient vehicles; and
- modifying current outdoor lighting to reduce energy consumption.