

Walking the Talk

By: Lisa Evenson – Sustainable Greater Green Bay Task Force Member

When Mayor Jim Schmitt established the Sustainable Greater Green Bay Task Force (Task Force), his focus was not only to encourage residents and businesses to get involved with implementing sustainable initiatives, but getting City buildings, fixtures, and policies changed to reflect a new mind set of the triple bottom line – *people, profit, planet*.

In Green Bay City Departments, staff has been directed to think about sustainability when replacing or updating equipment, buildings, or policies. In the Department of Public Works (DPW), more efficient street lighting was installed in residential areas, saving an estimated \$131,700 in annual energy costs. From State and Focus on Energy grants, all 116 City traffic signals were retrofitted with light emitting diodes (LEDs), for an estimated annual energy savings of \$32,000. LEDs are brighter, last longer, and save energy. Traffic signals were also retimed to reduce travel time, number of stops, and fuel consumption.

DPW has long maintained an anti-idling policy on City vehicles. The policy requires employees to shut off vehicles when not in use. Some City vehicles also have a vehicle control module that makes it even simpler for employees by automatically shutting off the vehicle after five minutes of idling. Anti-idling policies reduce air emissions, fuel, and truck maintenance.

In the City's Parks Department, staff has been following Metro Area Guidelines on *Lawn Management for a Healthy Environment*. For more than 20 years, the Department has used City wood chipping/debarking products for mulch under City trees and shrubs. When the Department's budget allows, it has also replaced single pane windows in heated shelters with more energy efficient double-pane windows. And with the help of DPW and the Task Force, the Department has installed rain gardens at McAuffe Park. Rain gardens are inexpensive to install, implement, and control stormwater runoff.

Focusing on continued improvement, the City has installed Energy Star office equipment, energy efficient chillers at City Hall and the Police Department, and replaced all lighting in City Hall and the Main and Pine Street parking ramps with more efficient fluorescent bulbs. To improve the health and well being of its employees, the City now offers on-site nursing services and health education seminars to help maintain a healthy and productive workforce. Projects like these demonstrate the City is not only walking the talk and improving its triple bottom line, but also striving to lead by example.