

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

THE COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION ALLIANCE ANNOUNCES

THE CAPITOL HILL SUMMIT SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND THE NEW ECONOMY OCTOBER 15-16, 2009

WASHINGTON, DC
OMNI SHOREHAM HOTEL

Background

The national Community Revitalization Alliance is a growing coalition of community development, sustainable development and environmental justice stakeholders working at the federal level on equitable development, community revitalization, environmental quality and public health policies. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Alliance connects a growing number of community development corporations (CDCs), environmental justice groups, civic associations, faith based organizations, community based businesses, developers, academics, researchers, practitioners and thought leaders in these fields from around the nation.

To-date, the Community Revitalization Alliance represents 55 organizations and institutions spanning 21 states. The Alliance is hosted and managed by Sustainable Community Development Group, Inc. The groups and the institutions that comprise the Community Revitalization Alliance are leaders in problem-solving and implementing innovative rural and urban strategies and projects. Their work epitomizes place-based best practices.

The Capitol Hill Summit on Sustainable Communities, Environmental Justice and the New Economy convenes these organizations and others in Washington, DC October 15-16, 2009 seizing this moment to impact the new economy. In collaboration, the Alliance seeks to ensure that federal investments, including the federal budget and economic recovery efforts, advance sustainability by definition incorporating equity, addressing and meeting community needs.

The Capitol Hill Summit is a venue wherein the community sector frames and leads a public policy conversation among multi-stakeholders from the perspective of sustainable communities. The community sector of our concern is comprised of people – families, children and workers who live in disadvantaged neighborhoods with unhealthy air and housing, vacant and contaminated properties, unsafe parks, unreliable public transportation, limited grocery stores and healthy food options, and health disparities. Community stakeholders are concerned about rapid delivery of environmental and economic benefits to people whose needs are most chronic in areas hardest hit by the recession. Additionally, communities desire mandates to strongly engage people and grassroots workers in setting the governmental investment agenda and spending decisions.

In terms of recovery expenditures and other important appropriations such as the FY 2010 budget, ongoing and new environmental and energy programs, the Community Revitalization Alliance's Capitol Hill Summit gathers key constituencies to address resolving economic, social and health disparities through sustainable infrastructure investments, jobs, wealth creation and commitment of other relevant resources.

National Planning Committee

A national multi-stakeholder Planning Committee informs our work. The first planning meeting and invitational luncheon convened in Washington, DC Monday, May 11, 2009. The committee represents a broad cross-section of the public, private, nonprofit, philanthropic and community sectors each of which is integral to federal sustainable development policy decision making, environmental quality and energy efficiency investments. Nearly fifty interdisciplinary participants engaged with us in brainstorming and planning for the Capitol Hill Summit.

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Critical influentials and decision makers are collaborating with community to implement the Summit including, for example, US EPA, the National Center for Environmental Health/Centers for Disease Control, ATSDR, US Green Building Council, Enterprise Community Partners, the Center for Social Inclusion, National Community Reinvestment Coalition, National Low Income Housing Coalition, Smart Growth America, Shelterforce, the Environmental Justice Resource Center, the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, a consortium of African American mayors, a host of local governments, leading social and economic justice nonprofits, foundations, noted scientists, economists, planners and academia. In addition, briefings convened through our Inter-Agency Initiative provided outreach to a number of federal agencies.

The breadth and depth of our partner base is a pioneering effort to break down silos, catalyze diversity and collaboration. Communities need to access, communicate and interact with decision makers and thought leaders. The time is right to optimize and build upon this committed and willing group of partners. The Summit will officially launch a multi-front approach from the vantage point of communities with the potential of addressing sustainability issues ranging from public health, jobs, transportation equity and environmental remediation to infrastructure and investments. There is National Planning Committee consensus about follow-up initiatives including regional convenings, a conference in 2010 that measures progress and more.

Capitol Hill Summit Overview

Borrowing from the lexicon of the stimulus package, it's difficult to have projects that are "shovel-ready" when you're in a community that doesn't have a shovel. Distressed neighborhoods must be prioritized. Decisions about federal dollars should reflect the importance of revitalizing disadvantaged places and creating wealth as well the connectivity between sustainable community and economic development, the environment and health.

Equitable development, environmental quality, energy efficiency, public health, climate change, natural resources conservation, transportation, growing the green economy, minority entrepreneurship, job creation, wealth-building and green collar jobs are interlinked in the new economy. Together with directing resources to state and local government coffers, policy decision makers should ensure that funding is dedicated to the community sector and that local organizations are engaged and instrumental to decisions about investments and spending.

The Capitol Hill Summit on Sustainable Communities, Environmental Justice and the New Economy is a venue wherein the community sector frames and leads a public policy conversation among stakeholders from the perspective of sustainable communities. Problem-solving regarding issues under this umbrella demand community engagement and require the involvement of a range of public and private sector stakeholders whose decisions affect local places and quality of life.

Our intention is to help policy decision makers create the language, tools and approaches which flow from the connections between sustainability, growth and development and economic prosperity factoring in the relationship of redevelopment to revitalization, redressing climate impacts, environmental restoration and health.

The Capitol Hill Summit explores and highlights ways that ongoing federal efforts and the federal budget can help to ready underserved populations and neighborhoods for economic prosperity. The event fosters collaboration with Congress, the Executive Branch, governmental agencies and others at the national level as well as influential public and private sector stakeholder groups in ways that:

- define sustainability and effective approaches to achieve it in the new economy;
- deploy the power and advance the views of local people;
- deliver resources to people, businesses and workers in distressed neighborhoods;
- help rebuild underserved places into sustainable communities;
- ensure environmental quality for everyone;
- afford opportunities for health and well-being; and
- result in shared prosperity.

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Integrating Mayors

The Capitol Hill Summit is also an opportunity to network and link mayors participating in our Greening of Brownfields Program with policy decision makers and the leading organizations, institutions and stakeholders who join us October 15-16. The Greening of Brownfields Program, a US EPA funded initiative, addresses distressed urban and rural neighborhoods and incorporates the following:

- Sustainability Planning
- Green Development Options
- Environmentally Friendly Infrastructure
- Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
- Job Creation and Green Jobs
- Green Design and Certification Programs
- Financing and Public-Private Partnerships.

Principally, the mayors in this first phase of our Greening of Brownfields Program (GOBP) are African American leaders of small cities and towns who are facing the complex challenges of revitalizing disadvantaged communities without the requisite human capital or resources. Early results from our Mayors' Needs Assessment show, for example, that mayors of small places particularly are being left behind in the transition to the new national environmental and energy future.

Much like the Summit, the GOBP is centered on healthy and environmentally sensitive community and economic development as well as inclusion of low income communities in the benefits of the green economy. Therefore, the Summit features a session entitled "Mayors Roundtable: Localizing the Green Economy" accompanied by interactive discussion that identifies strategies and solutions.

We facilitate community preparedness to capitalize on the new green economy. The Summit is focused on ensuring that public policies and investments prioritize inclusion of disadvantaged communities of color and low income communities in the benefits of the new economy.

Summit Objectives

Our Capitol Hill Summit objectives involve changing the reality of communications and structural barriers at the federal level which impede community preparedness to capitalize on the new green economy and stymie delivery of resources to the underserved, under-employed and chronically unemployed. The Summit is focused on ensuring that public policies and investments prioritize inclusion of communities of color and low income communities in the benefits of the new economy.

Summit objectives:

1. connecting underserved communities to policy decision makers, key stakeholders and leaders;
2. showcasing community best practices in sustainability and leveraging the green economy;
3. influencing the national discourse, decisions and investments in ways that position underserved communities to benefit from environmental and health, economic and social advances of the new economy;
4. advancing a definition of sustainability defined as incorporating equity and shared prosperity; and
5. promoting a sustainable communities framework.

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The sustainable communities framework integrates a range of elements including:

- urban and rural community and economic development
- environmental quality, public health
- redressing climate, energy efficiency
- smart growth and access to transportation
- green, affordable housing, healthy schools
- workforce development, green jobs and job creation
- minority entrepreneurship.

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