

Sustainability Indicators Report FAQ

Q: How can a copy of the Sustainability Indicators 2016 Report be obtained?

A: It can be downloaded from this web address:
<http://sustainablelacrosse.com/PDF/sustainabilityIndicatorsReport.pdf>

Q: What is the Sustainable La Crosse Commission?

A: In 2009, the City of La Crosse Common Council and the La Crosse County Board formally approved the "City of La Crosse & La Crosse County Strategic Plan for Sustainability", which specified that a Sustainable La Crosse Commission be established to review the progress of implementing this plan. As suggested in the Strategic Plan for Sustainability, the Commission recognizes that sustainability initiatives offer tax savings, health benefits, and positive environmental outcomes for La Crosse area residents. In addition, sustainability initiatives dovetail nicely with economic initiatives occurring in this area, including promoting tourism, attracting young professionals and new businesses to relocate to the area, and providing quality education and exceptional health care services to the region.

Commission members include elected members of the La Crosse Common Council, the La Crosse County Board, and the Onalaska Common Council and citizens representing business, health care, higher education, and local community groups. Current Commission members are:

Harvey Bertrand, Onalaska Common Council
Patrick Brever, La Crosse Common Council
Rick Cornforth, La Crosse County Board
Rick Diermeier, citizen representative

Mike Giese, La Crosse County Board
Dorothy Lenard, citizen representative
Tom Thompson, citizen representative
Rob Tyser, citizen representative

Q: The Indicators Report summarizes general trends in energy usage by La Crosse city and county government offices. Do these trends apply across most departments and facilities?

A: The Indicators Report is general summary of energy use patterns by city and county governmental operations rather than a detailed analysis of patterns and factors that account for these patterns. General inspection suggests electricity usage by some city departments that use significant amounts of electricity (e.g., the Sanitary Sewer Utility and the Water Utility) declined substantially, presumably because more efficient equipment has been installed. Also, the large addition to the County's Law Enforcement Center seemed to significantly increase the energy efficiency of this facility. Undoubtedly, greater efficiencies have also been realized in other city and county facilities and departments. A detailed spreadsheet data file is available for inspection and analysis by city and county managers, staff, and department heads.

Q: Carbon emissions from city and county governmental operations have declined significantly in recent years. What factors account for this decline?

A: As explained in the Indicators Report, most of these reductions are the result of fewer carbon emissions associated with use of electricity by city and government operations. Overall, many city and county departments/facilities are using less electricity, which helps lower carbon emissions. However, most reductions in carbon emissions are a result of "cleaner" electricity provided by Xcel Energy. Like many other electricity-producing utilities, Xcel increasingly generates electricity using wind and natural gas, and thus uses less coal. Generating electricity from wind power releases little carbon pollution, and burning natural gas to generate electricity releases much less carbon pollution than does burning coal. The shift away from coal is

largely driven by the cheaper cost of natural gas and competitive pricing of wind-generated electricity. It is also worth noting that Xcel energy is a national leader in providing green electricity to its customers.

Q: What other sustainability initiatives could offer significant opportunities for City and County municipalities?

A: Currently, the Sustainable La Crosse Commission has identified two areas of focus: (1) working with the La Crosse County Solid Waste Department regarding waste generated by construction-demolition activities and ash tree removal, and (2) helping to promote increased use of alternative transportation options within/among municipalities in La Crosse County. Other creative sustainability opportunities may also exist, for example using methane gas produced by La Crosse's waste water treatment plant as a source of renewable energy to generate electricity.

The Commission also encourages suggestions from those of you reading and studying this material. Other observations, suggestions, and comments are always welcome. Please feel free to contact any of the commission members with your thoughts. In addition, you may call or e-mail the La Crosse County Sustainability Coordinator, Nick Nichols, at nnichols@lacrossecounty.org or 608-785-9768.