

Enhancing Justice and Sustainability at the Local Level:
Affordable Policies for Urban Governments

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Abstract

There are creative, affordable ways to address community development and also achieve goals of environmental sustainability. Approximately thirty case studies, based on interviews and usually also site visits, were completed during 2005. The case studies examined community gardening and urban agriculture, the greening of publicly controlled urban electricity and bus agencies, reuse centers, and local business associations in the United States. Policy recommendations for city governments that emerged from the case studies are summarized here. There are many opportunities for financially pressed cities to assist the development of 'just sustainability' projects with minimal financial commitments. They can do so by rechanneling the purchasing decisions of public agencies, building partnerships with community organizations, and developing the small business sector.

Although few policymakers are opposed to ‘sustainability’ in the abstract, urban governments with tight budgetary constraints face difficult choices when trying to find funding for programs that would make a region more environmentally sustainable. Proposals that are environmentally sound and also help people at lower income levels are often regarded as noble but unaffordable. This essay suggests some ways that a city government can enhance the level of equity and sustainability with minimal financial commitments, through the purchasing decisions of public agencies, partnerships with community organizations, and development of the small business sector. Specifically, we examine four areas where city governments can serve as a catalyst for projects at the intersection of enhanced equity and sustainability: food, energy, housing, and small businesses.

Background and Method

Environmental sustainability is understood here in Daly’s sense of moving society to consumption levels within ‘sustainable limits’: for renewable resources, consumption must not exceed the rate of regeneration; for nonrenewable resources (such as fossil fuels and minerals), consumption must not exceed the rate of substitution by renewable resources; and for pollutants, environmental deposits must not exceed the rate at which the environment can recycle, absorb, and render them harmless (Daly, 1990). The focus of our research project was on urban sustainability initiatives in the United States that also enhance local control of the regional economy and/or opportunities for low-income members of the regional community.

Previous research on sustainability initiatives in American cities has documented a wide range in the types of initiatives and levels of commitments and civic engagement (Portney, 2003, 2005). For additional background, Hess examined city government web sites of the large, central cities in the twenty-largest metropolitan areas in the U.S to determine what city government initiatives were in place. The review indicated that progress in establishing sustainability programs remains at best incomplete. Portland and Seattle have offices specifically devoted to sustainability, and a few cities have an environment department that includes sustainability issues within its purview (Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Francisco). A few other cities have an environmental office, a cross-departmental coordinating committee, or a program or initiative in the mayor’s office (Cleveland, Dallas, Denver, Minneapolis, New York, and Phoenix). In the remaining eleven cities surveyed, there is no evidence of any institutionalized sustainability programs or departments, although

sustainability initiatives do occur on a piecemeal basis in the departments of planning, parks and recreation, and neighborhoods.

Even where city governments have made sustainability a high-priority goal, there is little evidence to date of programs that connect sustainability and social justice goals. The connection can be made in two main ways. The first approach is oriented toward environmental justice concerns, for example in the remediation of the toxic burden (air, water, and other pollution) of all neighborhoods, but especially low-income neighborhoods that carry a disproportionate share of toxic burdens (Agyeman, Bullard, & Evans, 2004). A survey of 77 U.S. cities that had a population in excess of 200,000 in 1990 revealed that only five had connected environmental sustainability with environmental justice: Albuquerque, Austin, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Seattle (Warner, 2002).

A second connection between sustainability and justice can be seen in a broad range of projects that build social justice goals into initiatives oriented toward urban greening (Agyeman, 2005a, 2005b). Our approach to what Agyeman has termed 'just sustainability' focuses on such efforts. Specifically, we are interested in projects, policies, and programs that can serve the double goal of enhancing urban sustainability while assisting low-income residents and developing new job opportunities. This essay examines local government efforts that could enhance sustainable, just ventures in four areas: community gardens and related urban agriculture projects, the greening of locally controlled electricity and public transit, reuse centers (large buildings that sell salvaged appliances and home materials such as doors, windows, and lumber), and local, independent business development.

Methodology

During 2005 we developed approximately thirty case studies of sustainable, just, locally controlled organizations. Each case study is five to ten pages long, and the entire set is available on the project web site (www.davidjhess.org/sustlocCasesTOC.html). Each case study was based on material available on the Internet and in publications, and in most cases we also conducted an on-site visit and semi-structured interviews. The breakdown of the case studies appears in Table 1. The sample size of thirty was chosen based on the size of the supporting grant.

<i>Category of Sustainable, Just Localism</i>	<i>Case Study by Locale</i>
Community gardens and urban farming	Austin, Boston, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, Portland, Sacramento, San Francisco, Seattle
Greening of publicly controlled electricity	Austin, Sacramento, San Francisco, Seattle
Greening of public transit	Chattanooga, Oakland, San Francisco, Seattle
Reuse Centers	Austin, Baltimore, Berkeley, Burlington, Oakland, Pittsburgh, Portland
Local and Green Business Associations	Austin, District of Columbia, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Vermont

Table 1

Case Studies of Sustainable, Just Localism

In selecting the topics for study, we chose two main geographic regions: the northwest (northern California, Portland, and Seattle) and the northeast. The choice was based partly on our proximity to sites in the northeast and partly on the fact that projects of this kind tend to be concentrated in the two regions of the country. We were also able to complete case studies from a few cities in the South and Midwest. Our goal was to conduct as many site visits as possible, given our budgetary and time constraints, and to explore the issues that have emerged in some of the programs throughout the country. Many of the case studies were completed by Hess during a sabbatical, which allowed research trips to the northwest, California, and Texas. Four graduate students and Winner conducted the other cases, and their contribution is credited in the by-lines of the relevant case studies. Unless otherwise noted, our information on specific cities and programs is based on the case studies.

Our semi-structured interview questions gathered information on three main topics. The exact questions varied across type of organization, but each case study was divided into the following three topics:

- 1) the history of the organization, governance, program scope, and relationship to other organizations;
- 2) how the organization understands and/or addresses goals of sustainability and equity, and what trade-offs, if any, were experienced between the goals;
- and

3) the role of government, the media, and other organizations in either helping or hindering the organization's goals of sustainability and local control, and what policy changes would be most helpful to the organizations.

The case studies include references to web sites, journalistic articles, technical studies, and academic studies where relevant. There is a limited social science literature on community gardening (e.g., Lawson, 2005; Von Hassell, 2002), the reuse/resale sector (e.g., Andrews and Maurer, 2001; Gregson and Crewe, 2003; Horne and Maddrell, 2002), and the broader issue of renewable energy and sustainable transportation (e.g., Heiman and Solomon, 2004; Rosen, 2001). However, most of the peer-reviewed literature related to the topics discussed here is technical (such as the evaluation studies for low-emissions urban bus fleets), and it is nonexistent for local, green business associations. Another article examines in more detail the greening of transit politics regarding the controversy over the use of clean diesel versus natural gas fuel (Hess, 2007), and other publications will be forthcoming. This essay will focus on the second part of the third of our main research questions: policy implications for local governments and the changes that the governments could enact.

Benefits and Affordability of Just Sustainability Projects

The projects that we examined were selected because they generally included both justice and environmental goals, although some were oriented more to one side and some to the other. The specific environmental benefits can be summarized briefly as follows: enhancing green spaces and improving access to organic or less toxic produce (community gardens), making communities more walkable (community gardens, public transportation, and local businesses), enhancing air quality (public transportation and public power), reducing waste streams going to landfills (reuse centers), and greening locally owned businesses (local business associations).

The justice goals can be divided into two major types. First, in a world in which local economies are increasingly dominated by large corporations that reduce the economic and political sovereignty of a region, locally controlled organizations make possible greater democratic participation and control over the direction of a regional economy. The argument is defended in a growing literature on local control (e.g., Shuman, 2000; Williamson et al., 2002) and on the benefits of locally owned, independent, small businesses for a community (Burlingham, 2005; Shuman, 2006). Local control can also have environmental dividends, such as

when electrical generation capacity is owned by a city government, and the city council pushes for changes toward renewable energy. For example, in Seattle the city government mandated that Seattle City Light become the nation's first carbon-neutral electrical utility.

A second dimension of justice involves the benefits that the organizations provide for the poorest members of the local economy. Community gardens frequently are located in low-income neighborhoods, from about 50% of all community gardens in relatively affluent Seattle to 80% in Cleveland. The gardens provide a source of food to the poor, but they also enhance neighborhood networks, reduce crime, enable food education, and contribute to food banks and public health in general (Armstrong, 2000). In the case of the greening of public transportation and public electricity, one of the benefits to the poor occurs through reduced emissions and enhanced air quality. Because old diesel barns and old electrical power plants are sometimes located in close proximity to low-income neighborhoods, changes that result in reduced or halted emissions can have direct benefits for low-income neighborhoods as well as for the general air quality of the region. Furthermore, in the case of public power, the profits from electricity sales go back to the city government, and some of the profits are channeled back into city programs that provide low-income energy payment assistance and residential weatherization (such as insulation for homes). In the case of reuse centers, home supplies are sold at a fraction of the cost of similar products in the chain stores. Finally, local business associations help strengthen the local small business retail sector, and they help to redevelop economically disadvantaged neighborhoods where small stores are struggling.

To varying degrees the local organizations that we studied also benefit the least fortunate members of a region by creating new jobs. The argument is less true for community gardening, but some urban farms provide training and job skill development that can lead to employment in the food sector. The argument is most applicable for the large reuse centers, which had thirty to forty employees and provided job training programs. Likewise, the programs of green public transportation and public power generated jobs in new industries (biodiesel refining, electric bus manufacturing, weatherization contracting, distributed energy installation, etc.). Regarding locally owned businesses, studies indicate that a significantly higher proportion of a dollar spent with them recirculates in the community in comparison with the same amount spent at a corporate retail chain (e.g., Civic Economics, 2002; Shuman 2006). Where local business associations also help connect urban consumers with regional farms, they facilitate job

creation through positions in food cooperatives, locally owned and oriented restaurants, and regional farms.

It is not possible to give an exact estimate of the cost to city governments of implementing programs that would allow community gardens, green public transit, green public power, reuse centers, and local green business associations to flourish. However, cities have the power to convene and catalyze developments, and in the cases that we examined, much of the work of city governments was in a catalyst mode. For example, in some cities the community gardening program rests in the hands of a half-time or single full-time city government employee who works in a parks and recreation department or neighborhood department of a city government. By working with nonprofit partners and community groups, and by using federal block-grants, existing public lands, state university extension services, and foundation resources, the single employee can leverage his or her job into a multiorganizational network of support for many gardens. Similar leveraging of resources can help support the development of nonprofit reuse centers and locally owned business associations.

In the case of the greening of public transit and public power, the situation is somewhat more complicated. City governments already have substantial organizations dedicated to service provisioning. The new investments in the greening of bus fleets and electrical generation sources require substantial planning, but in the long-term the investments pay for themselves. For example, the fleet manager in Seattle noted that there was substantial savings for hybrid-electric buses due to their higher reliability and fuel economy, and the long-term costs of wind energy are competitive with those of fossil fuels, which are rising. Other, more innovative financial arrangements are discussed below. Although investments in the greening of public transit and public power are well beyond the level of a staff position that is the key for community gardening and related projects, some cities have found a way to generate the investment funds without increasing taxes or cutting other parts of the city government budget.

The following sections will examine in more detail what city governments can do to enhance the development and health of the organizations. Each section will begin with a brief sketch of one example of the organization in one city. Readers interested in either the opening example or the other examples mentioned may follow up with the case studies on our research project's web site.

Community Gardening and Urban Agriculture

Seattle's community gardens (known locally as 'P-Patches') are a good example of the key role that a nonprofit advocacy organization can play. During the 1980s the organization that subsequent became the P-Patch Trust provided assistance to community gardeners and worked to maintain a role for the city government program during the city's budgetary crisis. By the late 1980s the nonprofit organization had begun to acquire land for some of the gardens. During the 1990s the organization and city government worked together to ensure relocation of gardens that were displaced by development and to include community gardening goals in the city plan. In 2000 the city council approved a strategic plan that included the goal of adding four new community gardens per year. At the upper end of the class structure, the P-Patch Trust has also worked with residential developers to encourage them to include rooftop gardens in their plans for condominiums, and at the lower end, the P-Patch Trust has programs dedicated to helping the 20 percent of the city's community gardens that are located on public housing land. The P-Patch Trust also maintains a low-income fund to help gardeners who cannot pay the nominal annual plot fee, and the gardens often have extra plots where food is grown to be given to food banks through a program called 'Lettuce Link'. Through those programs and others community gardening contributes to broader efforts to enhance community food security (Gottlieb and Fisher, 1996).

The Seattle case is a good example of a general principle that we encountered in our research: community gardens flourish in cities where there is a strong, nonprofit advocacy organization that can build partnerships with the city government. In some cases the organization has acquired land for the larger community gardens, and the ability to acquire land is especially important in cities that have experienced skyrocketing land values. The nonprofit organization partners both with the city government's community gardening program and with churches and other community organizations, which can provide access to land and other support. Working through local religious and ethnic organizations also helps to get the word out to the neighborhood and to solve linguistic and cultural issues as they arise. The city government representative can work with the nonprofit advocacy organization to convene meetings and develop networks that include gardeners, religious organizations, schools, foundations, wealthy sponsors, and ethnic/neighborhood groups. Because the work of gardeners is voluntary, the city government can leverage extensive resources by serving as a source of networking and information exchange without incurring the full costs of program implementation.

City governments can also help community gardens by providing access to public land on parks and other city property. In cities such as Seattle, where pressure on land values has been increasing, local government land (such as parks) is an important resource for community garden expansion. In cities that have not experienced skyrocketing land values, such as Cleveland and Detroit, city governments have sometimes converted abandoned lots that have defaulted to government ownership. Cleveland's land bank is one example of a mechanism established by a city government to allow community groups to garden on unused land. A land bank loans land to a community gardening group, but at some later date the city may still sell the land. When allowing community groups to use vacant lots for gardening, the city needs to consider the length of tenure and the size of the garden. Conversion of a vacant lot to gardening requires considerable investment from the gardeners and advocacy groups, and the gardeners are more likely to develop and maintain the garden if they have a long-term agreement with the city and if the gardening group is large enough to accommodate turn-over of membership.

The city can also assist the development of community gardens by figuring out how to convert new land so that it is cultivated safely. The city may be able to use block-grant funds to provide start-up services, such as soil testing, soil remediation, initial materials, and education and training. Another option is to rely on a nonprofit group, a foundation, and/or the university extension office to provide the start-up support. In most of our cases, the extent of a city government's support for community gardening was limited to one staff person. In a few cases the parks and recreation department can be used to help in start-ups and maintenance work.

The city's police force is another potential resource. In Cleveland some members of the police force work in gardens on a voluntary basis, and in other cities community gardens have been located in underutilized or crime-ridden parks. Police need to work with community gardeners to protect them against vandalism, but in turn the presence of community gardeners on a site can be a first step toward cleaning up a crime-ridden neighborhood and helping the police to improve the safety of neighborhoods.

The departmental home for the city government's community gardening program can be politically contentious. In some cases community gardens programs are located in the department of parks and recreation; in other cases they are placed in a department of neighborhoods. The choice of locating the program in one city department or another depends on local urban politics; garden managers have told us that what matters most is to be located in a strong department where there is support for the program. In some cases parks and

recreation departments have resisted community gardening. They view the extension of mandate as a form of mission drift, and they are concerned that the addition of community gardening will result in extra work for an over-stretched staff. It helps if community gardens associations and program managers harmonize their work with the departmental mission by emphasizing the recreational dimension of community gardens over food-provisioning. Likewise, if the community garden programs are housed in a neighborhoods or community development department, community gardens need to be defined as a form of community development. Community gardening representatives have reported that over time once recalcitrant members of parks and recreation departments come to see that community gardening has many benefits for the parks. The program Philadelphia Green of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society developed neighborhood groups that contributed to parks revitalization, thereby leveraging voluntary resources to help overstretched the overstretched parks staff. More generally, the location of community gardens on city parks can enhance neighborhood interest in park maintenance.

Another opportunity for city governments is to draw on the resources of school grounds, teachers, students, their parents, and the public educational system. Students and teachers often express enthusiasm for school gardens, particularly if some of the produce is consumed in the school cafeteria. However, we learned in Portland that because of the difficulty of maintaining school gardens during the summer holiday season, the most successful school gardens are actually community gardens located on school grounds. During the summer holidays, community gardeners can help maintain school plots that might otherwise be neglected. Schools can also be sites for farm-to-cafeteria programs, which support local farms and educate students about the value of fresh, locally grown food. Just as important, community gardens on school yards can be used for a variety of educational tasks, including teaching mathematics, biology, geology, economics, and other sciences.

At a broader level, several community gardening representatives mentioned that city governments that have a general plan should include community gardening in the plan. The plan may define gardens as part of overall green-space goals (such as 10 percent of all land), and it may explicitly develop a target ratio of the number of community gardens per person, as the city of Seattle has done. The formation of a food policy council and food charter can also be part of a city government's goals to build networks around food and agriculture that are often broader than community gardening per se. For example, the city government can help to articulate

community gardening with a wide range of local food-related activities, including food security organizations, farmers' markets, farm-to-restaurant and farm-to-cafeteria programs, locally oriented restaurants, food cooperatives, and local farms. The city can also encourage the development of nonprofit urban farms where land is available. For example, in Portland, Sacramento, Detroit, and Boston, nonprofit urban farms not only produce food but serve as an educational site for youth training and school groups.

Many of the proposals discussed above can be accomplished with existing resources and additional voluntary action from the community. The more expensive needs of community gardens—such as acquiring land for gardens on private land that are at risk or remediating toxic soil in new lots—can be met by developing partnerships with nonprofit organizations, wealthy sponsors, and foundations, or by using community block grant funds. In this sense, the primary role of the city government is to serve as a catalyst that connects neighborhood groups with community gardens, the broader local food system, and local nonprofit organizations and funders. Some of the most successful programs at present are based upon multi-organizational partnership models (Chatterton and Style, 2001; Evans, 2002). In this mode, as cities connect community gardening to general plans for greenspace development and utilization, they also bridge three important goals: recreation, food provisioning, and neighborhood development.

Energy and Public Agencies

In 1969 Chattanooga had the dubious honor of having the worst air urban air pollution in the United States. The poor air quality contributed to the economic decline of the downtown, and it has taken decades to revitalize the city. As part of a broader urban planning and visioning process that began in the 1980s, the Chattanooga Area Regional Transportation Authority (CARTA) developed a downtown electric circulator bus route. Because most of the energy for the electricity comes from the hydroelectric sources of the Tennessee Valley Authority, the reduction in local diesel emissions did not lead to a displacement onto a fossil-fuel burning electrical plant. The buses operate free of charge between two tourist sites (the Chattanooga Choo-Choo exhibit at the old train station and the riverfront area), and they are funded by fees collected from two parking garages that are located at the two poles of the line. The buses were manufactured by a local company that at its height generated 100 jobs and sold electric buses to cities all over the world. The company eventually failed after it diversified into the manufacture of larger buses, but CARTA has not yet given up on starting a similar company. The buses played

a key role in revitalizing the downtown, and small businesses in other neighborhoods asked that similar routes be added in other parts of the city.

CARTA provides one example of how fleet purchase decisions can be leveraged to support local industrial development that leads to job creation while simultaneously improving emissions and air quality. We also found that Seattle Metro Transit of King County was purchasing biodiesel, which benefited the state's soy and biodiesel refining industry. Likewise, in Oakland, California, the Alameda-Contra Costa County Transit District was working on a hydrogen fuel-cell project that involved a partnership with a local California company. Because bus manufacturing is a global industry and fleet purchases are large capital investments, transit agencies have limited options and must pay close attention to costs. However, the examples mentioned here suggest that in some cases the greening of public transit fleets can be articulated with purchases from and partnerships with local industries. As biofuels become more widely used and more widely available, they are likely to be the primary example. The shift to cleaner fuels will benefit regions by providing jobs and reducing exposure to diesel emissions, which are a widely recognized carcinogen and have been the target of environmental justice mobilizations (Hess, 2006).

Another area of policy change that emerges from the Chattanooga example is the innovative combination of parking and traffic management policies with urban transit fleet conversion strategies. Because one garage at the end of the downtown circulator route is located at the off ramp of an exit from a major highway, it can capture traffic as it flows into the downtown area. The goal of the location for the garage is to get people to shift from cars to their feet, and to provide them with an enjoyable, clean, safe, and free bus alternative to their car. Although hardly a low-cost investment, the parking garage pays for itself and contributes revenue for the circulator buses. Another, much less expensive example of a reform oriented toward the greening of public transit is the decision by the city of San Francisco to put parking and traffic management under the same roof as its transit agency, so that policies can be developed in tandem. One outcome of coordinated policy was the proposal to place a toll on traffic entering the downtown area, both to reduce traffic and to fund public transit options. Various other policies can combine either urban design (as in the location of the garage in Chattanooga) or tax-shifting (as in the San Francisco proposal) to increase public transit opportunities and fund those opportunities with disincentives for automobile use in downtown areas.

Regarding the parallel issue of the greening of public power, some large American cities are fortunate to have retained control over their electric utilities. As a result their public power agencies have tremendous potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at a local level while spurring the growth of small businesses (Morris, 2001). American cities that have public power can follow the examples of Austin, Sacramento, and Seattle by developing plans to green their energy portfolios, either by increasing direct ownership of renewable energy (such as by investing in wind farms) or by motivating customers to share investment costs through distributed renewable energy, such as rooftop solar, and weatherization. In turn the investments help generate regional jobs in wind farm construction and local jobs for energy contractors and suppliers. Austin has also increased participation in its voluntary green-pricing program (which funds wind energy investment and purchases) by allowing customers to lock in on long-term wind energy prices. Whereas demand for green pricing programs has been lackluster in many other cities due to the price premium, in Austin demand for the program has been strong, because it is set up to serve as a hedge against electricity price inflation.

Unfortunately, because most large American cities do not have public power agencies, they are less able to press their investor-owned utilities into developing weatherization programs or renewable, distributed energy programs. One option is to convert to public power. However, municipalization of energy generation and distribution is highly risky politically, because investor-owned utilities will fight initiatives with well-funded campaigns and draw on widespread skepticism over government ownership (see our case study of the San Francisco struggle). Furthermore, there are also significant economic risks, because the transition to public power requires huge investments in both the technical expertise and the infrastructure needed to take over electricity generation and transmission.

An alternative and much more affordable strategy that has emerged for cities that have investor-owned utilities is 'community choice aggregation,' which has been approved in a half dozen states. For example, although San Francisco failed at its effort to convert to public power, it is currently pursuing community choice aggregation. The city will aggregate all electricity customers and bid out the aggregated demand to the best generating contractor. Unlike green pricing schemes, where individual customers may opt in, under community choice customers may opt out during a specified opt-out period. By aggregating electricity demand and seeking competitive bids, a city can reduce its overall electricity costs and pass on the savings to residences and businesses. It is possible, as occurred in northern Ohio, to use the competitive

bidding process simultaneously to reduce the aggregate energy bill and to convert to greener energy sources. San Francisco is experimenting with another logical step forward: combining community choice with renewable energy bonds. By using the city's bond authority, the city can stipulate that the electricity contract also include renewable energy construction and energy conservation, the benefits of which are retained by the city and its residents over the long term. There are many other details on how to structure community choice programs that are beyond the scope of this article; Paul Fenn (2005) is the key architect of several such laws and a leader of the movement to establish community choice in California. If the San Francisco model proves successful, community choice will be able to leverage investor-owned utilities and the city bond authority to develop investments in distributed, renewable energy and conservation. As with public power agencies that are investing in distributed and renewable energy, the contracts can help spur jobs for local contractors and potentially also in a local renewable energy manufacturing industry. The projects will also create energy savings for consumers and improve air quality.

The Reuse Sector

The Rebuilding Center of Portland, Oregon, diverts thousands of tons of materials from landfills each year, serves as an anchor in a neighborhood undergoing revitalization, and provides jobs, medical benefits, and training to several dozen employees, many of whom come from low-income households. Like large home supply stores, the Rebuilding Center is a massive building that has areas that sell windows, doors, plumbing, appliances, electrical fixtures, hardware, lumber, and so on. The design of an extension to the building also uses recycled materials, local earth-based cob in a portion of the wall, and passive solar lighting. The nonprofit organization has diversified by developing a furniture remanufacturing division and a building deconstruction division (which, unlike demolition, takes buildings apart by hand in order to salvage materials). Given that over a third of the landfilled material is construction debris, deconstruction represents a potentially important contribution to the recycling stream.

Reuse centers such as the Rebuilding Center contribute to improving the lot of low-income residents in various ways. In addition to providing jobs, skill development, and access to affordable housing materials, the Rebuilding Center supports the community development organization "Our United Villages." Other reuse centers have donated material to disaster relief projects and local restoration projects (see the case studies of The Reuse People and the

Construction Junction). The centers that are run by Habitat for Humanity also serve as supply depots for their home construction projects, with revenues from the sale of materials used to help the organization to purchase materials needed to build more housing (see the case study of the Austin Re-Store).

More generally, reuse centers are part of a broader resale industry that includes second-hand businesses that sell used clothing, books, furniture, and other household items; the thrift sector of nonprofit, charitable organizations such as Goodwill and Salvation Army; flea markets and rummage sales; and yard or garage sales. Although resale is one of the most rapidly growing segments of the retail sector, city governments have not done much to capitalize on it as a source of job growth, community revitalization, and cost reduction for landfilling. Some smaller cities organize town-wide yard-sale days, and some cities also have business districts where antique and ‘junk’ stores are more common. Yet, to the best of our knowledge, American cities have not yet made concerted efforts to develop second-hand business districts. Cities could develop plans and assist businesses that might want to relocate to a used goods retail district, where shoppers could come to buy clothing, books, furniture, appliances, building materials, and a wide range of other goods at prices and quality that beat those of the big-box retail outlets.

The city government can help develop reuse centers in a number of other ways that are not especially costly to the city. For example, the government could help reuse entrepreneurs find space and funding, provide zoning changes or variances where needed, and provide assistance with insurance fee structures for deconstruction. Once the center is established, the city government can (and often does) assist by channeling job training and community service programs to the nonprofit reuse centers. The city government can also host a monthly collection event that channels goods to the reuse centers, and it can develop policies that do not allow residents and businesses to throw out reusable items, such as computers and windows.

The reuse center leaders whom we interviewed also suggested a number of ways that city governments could alter taxes, fees, and regulations to favor the development of the deconstruction businesses of reuse centers. If tipping fees are lower for demolition than deconstruction, the city could help equalize the costs of the two. Likewise, the city could require the full deconstruction of public buildings, and demolition permits for other buildings could be structured to require that a minimum percentage of materials be diverted from landfills into reuse. Building codes could be changed to ensure that new construction projects use materials

and assembly techniques that assume future deconstruction. The city could also help the reuse industry to change state and federal tax codes to allow a write-off for the full value of the deconstructed house, rather than the resale value of the salvaged materials.

Local and Green Business Associations

The Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia admits all locally owned businesses that want to join. They are not required to have implemented policies committed to living wages, meaningful work, job training, clean energy use, and the general greening of the enterprise. However, like other chapters of the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE), members should be committed to learning about the goals of 'local business ownership, economic justice, cultural diversity, and a healthy natural environment' (Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, 2006). The Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia is divided into 'building blocks' around the industrial sectors of food, energy, reuse and recycling, health, and independent retail. In addition to providing a meeting ground for local businesses where they can network, formulate policy goals, and learn about how to become more socially and environmentally responsible members of the local community, the organization also has run a 'buy local' campaign.

Independent, small business associations have proliferated in American cities partly because in the larger U.S. cities the Chamber of Commerce is often dominated by large, publicly traded corporations and by the service sector that works directly with those firms. To date, three major alternative local business organizations have emerged in the U.S. The American Independent Business Alliance (AMIBA) primarily serves locally owned, independent retail businesses. It has been active in campaigns to level the playing field for Main Street retailers faced with the competition of big-box retailers and formula businesses (such as franchises). In contrast, BALLE works with a wider range of businesses; it seeks to transform businesses so that their personnel policies are more just and their environmental practices and products more sustainable. BALLE does not allow publicly traded corporations among its members; rather, its focus is on locally owned, independent businesses and the strategy of 'import substitution' as a mode of local economic growth (Shuman, 2000). Like AMIBA, BALLE runs buy local campaigns that draw consumers to locally owned retail outlets, but BALLE also provides information for members who wish to purchase from other members in distant chapters. Finally, Co-op America affirms both social responsibility and environmental sustainability as key elements in the

membership criteria for affiliated businesses. Unlike BALLE, it includes publicly traded corporations among its members, and it sponsors programs that encourage greater social and environmental responsibility within the publicly traded sector. Co-op America is also more national in orientation, but it has begun to develop 'Green Page' catalogs for use at the local level. BALLE and Co-op America tend to profile what Beveridge (2005) has called 'eco-preneurs,' whereas AMIBA is more oriented toward the independent retail sector.

There are many imaginative ways in which an urban government can partner with local and green business associations to develop the local economy. For example, in Austin the AMIBA chapter has developed the IBIZ (Independent Business Development Zones) program, which provides advertising, logos in doors, streetlight signs, brochures, maps, and special event days to connect shoppers with locally owned businesses. One example of a special event day is the monthly event 'First Thursday,' when merchants of the South Congress Avenue district stay open late and sponsor special events aimed at attracting customers to the neighborhood. The chapter has also worked to find spaces for more locally owned businesses into new retail developments and to develop a trade show with business development workshops.

Another opportunity for city governments is to assist in the development of 'buy local' campaigns. BALLE chapters have sponsored 'buy local' campaigns that involve web- and print-advertising, guest speakers, special events, and other ways of connecting consumers with local businesses. The concept of buying local can also be extended to include investing in locally owned banks, credit unions, and community development financial institutions. Co-op America's locally oriented programs have focused on attracting investors. For example, its '1% in community' campaign urges members to put at least 1% of their investments in community investments, such as local credit unions or a community development bank.

A white paper published by the Sustainable Business Network of Greater Philadelphia (2003) outlined several possible ways that city governments can assist in the development of the locally-owned, small business sector. City governments can support buy-local campaigns, develop green (and used materials) procurement standards for purchasing, and put into effect green building codes (see also Day, 2005; Moore and Engstrom, 2005). The city can also conduct studies of where business losses are occurring and where regional assets are located, and it can develop regional indicators to identify where resources can be directed to help local businesses. Tax policies can be examined to identify opportunities for using the tax structure to support

locally owned, independent businesses, and for eliminating breaks for non-local business competitors.

Some cities and counties have taken the next step by passing ordinances that limit the size of retail businesses or place explicit limitations on formula businesses (Mitchell, 2001, 2003). Especially in small cities and tourist destinations, formula businesses can be detrimental to the local economy because they reduce the uniqueness and charm of the location. City governments could also encourage the patronage of local businesses by helping to conduct more research on the benefits to the local economy when consumers shift some of their purchases from global retail chain stores to local businesses.

Conclusion

The prospect of developing a more just and sustainable regional economy and society is appealing but may seem too expensive to attempt. If the coffers of a city or county government were overflowing, it would be relatively easy to invest in the many possible projects that grassroots groups propose under the rubric of local, environmental sustainability. Unfortunately, many cities today confront tight budgets and cutbacks in basic services. Under such conditions, the greening of the region, let alone a form of greening that also addresses issues of inequality and assistance to low-income residents, may seem impossibly utopian.

In this essay we have argued that there are affordable ways to address goals of enhanced environmental sustainability as well as community development goals of job creation and improvement in the lives of low-income members of a community. The approaches that we have discussed—community gardens, the greening of public transportation and energy agencies, reuse centers and resale districts, and local and green business associations—can be set up in a way that leverage the power of the city government at minimal cost or, in the case of the greening of public transportation and energy agencies, at a cost that is consistent with ongoing capital expenditures and investments. Regarding community gardens and reuse centers, the city government programs operate in partnership with nonprofit organizations and grassroots volunteer action (gardeners and reuse advocates). The city government can play the role of coordinator, supporter, and facilitator of land tenure. Regarding transportation and energy programs, a city government or associated local public agencies can structure renewable energy conversion so that jobs are created for locally owned businesses, such as distributed energy contractors and electric bus manufacturers. By leveraging community choice policies,

parking policies, and the bond authority, a city can generate revenue to support new investments. Regarding locally owned business associations, the city government can help to develop a vital sector of the local economy that provides good jobs that are not hostage to outsourcing and the run-away shop syndrome.

In summary, it is possible to enact policies and projects that create dynamic links between the goals of environmental sustainability and social justice. Cities can pursue both goals by creating new coalitions and moving the frame for environmental policy away from the mistaken idea that there is a trade-off between jobs and environmental quality (Gibbs, 2003). The strategies we have suggested here represent opportunities to improve the economy, environment, and equity of a region (Campbell, 1996). Through these alternative pathways it is possible to foster conditions of economic prosperity beneficial to citizens at all income levels and give them a shared stake in the region's future.

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