



Web Only

FREE LG Optimus T



Buy now

New 2-yr. agmt. req. Restr.

America's Largest

Regional planning key to green future

By Frank Abderholden fabderholden@stmedianetwork.com May 25, 2011 2:25AM



Print



E-Mail



Reprints



Share

2



Like

9



Tweet

40



The College of Lake County held its annual County Green, a one-day seminar focused on building a sustainable Lake County, Tuesday. | Michelle LaVigne-Sun-Times Media

GRAYSLAKE — The green economy may still be just a sprout, but efforts are under way to grow the idea to its full potential.

One such way is the second annual County Green conference held Tuesday at the College of Lake County.

“Community colleges have an important role in the green economy,” said Jerry Weber, president of the college, which was named this year’s Green Business by the Lake County Chamber of Commerce. The college was a founding member in 2010 of the Seed Center, a group of community colleges across the nation which put together a directory of green business and information on how to foster green businesses. The college also has a Sustainability Center that has resources for greening homes or businesses.

“The college is pleased to take a leadership role in accelerating social, economic and environmental sustainability on our campus, in our curriculum, within the local community and across the state of Illinois,” Weber said.

Lake County Board Chairman David Stolman of Buffalo Grove also outlined how the County Board has been a leader in producing model ordinances for alternative energy resources such as solar, wind and geothermal. The county is also addressing water supply and the handling of solid waste. Officials are intent on recycling some 60 percent of the waste stream by 2030.

Recent development by the county and the Lake County Forest Preserve District have also produced green buildings in Libertyville, Ryerson Woods and now the Green Belt Forest Preserve, where the country’s second “living wall” of plants is being built with the help of a grant from North Shore Gas.

Stolman also heralded the county’s move toward green transportation with the county’s traffic program that shows backups in real time so drivers can avoid them if possible, reduce congestion and increase air quality because of less-idling vehicles.

Some green resources and businesses involved in the County Green conference Tuesday:

Go to www.ecopro.biz, 708-445-0341 for information on electric bikes and www.illinoiselectricvehicles.com for cars that are all electric and cost about two to three cents per mile. Top speed 35 mph.

Find green businesses, events and discussion boards at the College of Lake County’s www.thegreeneconomycenter.com

Illinois Green Economy Network, a community college partnership for green curriculum, green workplace development and more.

Delta Institute, www.deltagreen.org/navigate, offers cost-effective solutions concerning waste stream reduction and re-use, saving energy, building or remodeling green and other topics.

Midwest Ecological Landscaping Association searchable data base for the public at www.melaweb.org. The group is a community of landscape designers, contractors, suppliers and nurseries committed to sustainability.

Pizzo & Associates, Ltd., www.pizzo.info, a 23-year-old sustainable landscaping company that has done work for the Lake County Forest Preserve District promotes native landscapes for business and commercial properties to save money.

The Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance is a collaborative network advancing energy efficiency in the Midwest to support sustainable economic development and environmental preservation at www.mwalliance.org.

Chicago Regional Council of Carpenters have certified energy analysts for home energy assessments and qualified contractors and carpenters who can do the work at www.carpentersunion.org.

“The Lake County Board is certainly committed to this cause, it’s one of our top strategic goals,” he said. Sustainability and economic growth “can create jobs and open new avenues, but it’s only possible through a broad cross section of our community,” Stolman said.

The conference’s keynote speaker was Randy Blankenhorn, executive director of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, which is responsible for planning across the seven-county Chicago region. The agency recently published the “Go To 2040” plan, which argues we are in a pivotal moment in history where we need to focus our resources to pursue sustainability, while competing in the global economy.

ARTICLE EXTRAS



 [View Gallery](#)

Blankenhorn said it’s not Waukegan against Schaumburg, Joliet or Chicago. “It’s us against China, India and Brazil,” he said.

The four goals of “Go To 2040” are livable communities, efficient governance, regional mobility and human capital.

Luckily for northeastern Illinois, water availability and energy costs are not that big of problem, although some areas without Lake Michigan water are struggling because ground water is being drawn out faster than it can replenish itself.

“Our energy is cheap compared to other areas,” he said, noting he also thought local food was too much of a niche market until he realized that 96 percent of our food comes from somewhere else. That means “96 percent of the money spent on food goes somewhere else,” he said.

Government needs to be more efficient by working more closely together since the Chicago region has more units of government than any other part of the country. The federal government also has its problems.

He cited the Transportation Department’s 108 programs as an example. “They said they were reducing that to 10 programs. ‘I said that’s a good start. You’ve got nine more to go,’” he said as the crowd of over 250 people laughed.

Finally, the way taxes are set and collected need to be changed.

“It’s not easy to change taxes because there are winners and losers,” he said, but the system dates back to the 1960s and is being examined by the planning group which will make recommendations by the end of the year. One of the group’s proposals is a tax hike for gasoline to fund not only highways, but also public transportation.

“We need to make public transportation the first option and not the last,” he said, which means safer, more modern buses and trains, and more friendly bus and train stops.

“The buses and trains we have are the same ones we had 50 years ago. We are still discussing whether there should be Wi-Fi on Metra. Why are we even asking about Wi-Fi? Give the commuters what they want,” he said.

“Long-range planning is tough to get your arms around, but we are dealing with decisions made 20 years ago and we need to make those decisions now (for the future),” he said.

WeightWatchers[®] Online

HURRY, OFFER ENDS SOON!

WEIGHT WATCHERS ONLINE SIGN UP FREE

When you buy our 3-Month Savings Plan

SIGN UP NOW



War and peace
The Nobel winner's fabled choice in Afghanistan

For intelligent, busy people."
The Wall Street Journal

Try 4 FREE issues!
click here



SABS Building System
Saebi Alternative Building System. Cost Effective
www.StrataUS.com

Better Energy Management
Estimate More Efficient Operations. Try Our Efficiency
www.MakeYourBuildingsWork.com

Solar Energy for PA Homes
Get prices on our Solar Calculator. Leading PA in solar
www.astrumsolar.com

Ads by Yahoo!

SEARCH JOBS ON THE GO.

Available on the **App Store**

monster.com

Search

GO

newssun.suntimes.com

- Blogs
- Send feedback
- Contact Us
- About Us
- Advertise with Us
- New sletters

News-Sun

- Subscribe
- Reader Services
- Online Photo Store
- Licensing
- Reprints

Affiliates

- Wantsadeal
- YourSeason.com
- RogerEbert.com
- Public Record Search
- SearchChicago - Homes
- New and Used Cars from ToDrive.com
- SearchChicago - Directories
- Centerstage

Express Links

- Obituaries
- Blogs
- Video
- Yellow Pages
- Photo Store
- The Fixer Form

Partners

- BlockShopper.com
- Legacy.com
- Zip2Save