

# PlantGreen

## The Environmental Sustainability Plan for Oak Park and River Forest

UPDATE / JANUARY 2012

### Sustainable Teachers Network

PlantGreen is organizing the first meeting of the Oak Park and River Forest Sustainable Teachers Network on Tuesday, February 28th at Seven Generations Ahead, located at 642 S. Lombard Ave., Oak Park from 4:00 – 5:00pm. The gathering will include teachers from Oak Park and River Forest public and private schools who are interested in developing and promoting strategies for incorporating sustainability-related curricula, program activities, and projects into classroom and after school learning. The group will also discuss ways to educate and support teachers about resources for projects related to renewable energy, school gardens, waste reduction, and more. To RSVP, contact [act@sevengenerationsahead.org](mailto:act@sevengenerationsahead.org) (subject line: Sustainable Teachers Task Force).

#### Complete Streets Now on the Books

On January 3rd the Village of Oak Park Board voted 7-0 to pass a "Complete Streets" policy that will ensure that any new street developments accommodate pedestrians and cyclists, as well as cars. New road designs will incorporate bike lanes, more frequently changing crosswalks, and other features that make it easier for people to bike and walk. The complete streets checklist includes features such as handicap-accessible sidewalks, count-down pedestrian signals and bus shelters, and supports strategies and goals outlined in the Oak Park Bike Plan, PlantGreen, and the Oak Park Pioneering Healthy Communities initiative. Mark Fenton, a nationally renowned urban planner and complete streets advocate who led a walking tour and strategy session with community elected officials as part of GreenTown Oak Park in October stated, "Oak Park has a lot going for it already as a livable community, and this policy will help Oak Park connect the dots and create routes that will make biking and walking a default choice of transportation for more residents."

### Strategy Area Two: ENERGY

PlantGreen incorporates nine strategies: Education, Energy, Waste, Water, Community Development, Transportation, Green Economic Development, Open System and Ecosystem Preservation and Food. Last issue we covered Education; this issue we provide an overview of the Energy initiative. The plan calls for reducing energy consumption and increase energy efficiency on commercial, institutional and residential buildings in Oak Park and River Forest. See the plan for specific goals: 30% reduction within ten years and a 25% increase in renewable energy.

### Projects on the Move

#### Solar Panels on the Avenue Garage

The Village of Oak Park is in the process of erecting a 99-Kilowatt solar photovoltaic panel system on the top deck of the Avenue Garage on North Boulevard. Thanks to a 75% grant obtained from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Oak Park was able to bid out the project last spring. The Board approved the hiring of Solar Service in October 2011, and the company immediately went to work obtaining permits and ordering materials. The racking structure is expected to be installed in February, which will require a one-day closure of the garage, the alleys around the garage as well as North Blvd. between Oak Park Avenue and Euclid Street. Once installed, the system is expected to offset 30% of the garage's electrical use while serving as a local example of municipal investment in renewable energy.

#### Costs Savings at Oak Park Residence Corp

By performing simple energy efficiency upgrades, the Oak Park Residence Corporation [OPRC] expects to save 20% on fuel costs with additional electricity savings for tenants. OPRC worked with the Energy Savers Program <<http://www.cntenergysavers.org>>, a one-stop energy efficiency shop for multifamily building owners, to implement low-cost improvements such as insulating units and plugging air leaks at One Ontario Court, a 49-unit vintage building. Energy Savers is a project of CNT Energy <<http://www.cntenergy.org>> and Community Investment Corporation <<http://www.cicchicago.com/>> (CIC), and provides a streamline approach to help multifamily building owners invest in energy-saving improvements. CNT Energy provides an energy assessment, recommended cost-effective improvements and on-going technical assistance including monitoring ongoing savings while CIC offers low-interest financing to pay for the work. Phillip Kaufman, OPRC Director of Special Projects states, "CNT Energy has been in nearly all of our buildings – nearly 700 units - and has provided essential guidance on energy saving measures." DNR Construction, Inc., of Oak Forest, IL was the contractor. The property is located across Ontario from West Suburban Hospital. For more information about this building or how to save energy at your rental property contact Phillip Kaufman at [okparkrc.com](mailto:okparkrc.com) or Jeanine Otte at [jotte@cntenergy.org](mailto:jotte@cntenergy.org) or visit [www.cntenergysavers.org](http://www.cntenergysavers.org) <<http://www.cntenergysavers.org>>.

#### Whole Foods Market Waste Audit

Whole Foods River Forest conducted its first waste audit on January 19th which included weighing all of the trash, liquids, compost and recycling that it produces in a 24 hour period. Led by a team from SGA, this audit is the first of multiple large institution audits that will be conducted over the next three months as part of a PlantGreen initiative to engage Oak Park and River Forest large institutions (hospitals, universities, high schools, food businesses) in diverting food scraps from landfill through a developing food scrap collection initiative. Whole Foods representative Lauren White stated, "The audit with Seven Generations Ahead will give us a closer look at where we can improve and hopefully by April we'll be diverting even more trash from going into the landfill!"

#### "Rushing" to Save Energy

For the third year in a row, Rush Oak Park Hospital has been awarded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star in recognition of superior energy performance. As an Energy Star building, Rush Oak Park Hospital uses 35% less energy and generates 35% fewer greenhouse gas emissions than similar buildings across the nation. It is one of three hospitals in the state and the only building in Oak Park with the Award. For more information on Rush Oak Park's strategies, contact Cynthia Vasquez at [Cynthia\\_J\\_Vasquez@rush.edu](mailto:Cynthia_J_Vasquez@rush.edu).

### WHAT'S NEXT

#### Residential Food Scrap Collection in South Oak Park?

Yes. April 2012. The Village of Oak Park is moving ahead with the collection of food scraps from residences as part of a pilot program to divert more material from landfill and achieve community greenhouse gas emission and waste reduction goals. The Village of Oak Park in collaboration with PlantGreen and SEOPCO will host three community forums in South Oak Park that will provide residents with information on the Village's new residential food scrap collection pilot program targeted for April 2012 and seek input on implementation. The forums, listed below, will also provide brief updates on PlantGreen project implementation and ways to get involved. For more information contact [act@sevengenerationsahead.org](mailto:act@sevengenerationsahead.org).

#### South Oak Park Residential Food Scrap Program Forum #1

Wednesday, February 8, 2012  
7:00-8:30pm  
Irving Elementary School  
1125 S. Cuyler, Oak Park

#### South Oak Park Residential Food Scrap Program Forum #2

Monday, February 13, 2012  
7:00-8:30pm  
Lincoln Elementary School  
1111 South Grove, Oak Park

#### South Oak Park Residential Food Scrap Program Forum #3

Thursday, February 16, 2012  
7:00-8:30pm  
Ascension Catholic School, Pine Room  
601 Van Buren, Oak Park

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SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION

## PlantGreen

Through PlantGreen, Oak Park and River Forest have a sustainability plan. Developed with community input, the plan features multiple strategies within nine sustainability topic areas. This newsletter will keep you updated on PlantGreen progress as well as sustainability-related news from around Oak Park and River Forest.