



Sustainable Cleveland

Uniting social, environmental & financial assets for innovative advantage.

812 Huron Road East, Suite 650
Cleveland, OH 44115
Ph: 216.621.1312, Ext. 101
Fax: 216.621.0577
katya@sustainablecleveland.com

Organizational Background

Sustainable Cleveland convened in 2002 as a partnership between Dave Nash, an environmental attorney with experience and relationships in the corporate community, and Lisa Hong, a business and civic entrepreneur, environmental advocate, and former lobbyist who brings knowledge and contacts in the entrepreneurial and non-profit sectors. Capitalizing on their respective expertise and networks, Dave and Lisa formed Sustainable Cleveland, a Community Action Team to spur sustainable economic development in Northeast Ohio. The group bases its work on the premise that leveraging social and professional relationship networks can further a civic organization's mission quickly, cost-effectively, and with significant community impact.

Briefly, our vision, mission, and goals are as follows:

Vision: Establish Northeast Ohio as a global model of a 21st-century community with a thriving economy, high quality of life, and a regional brand based on sustainability-driven innovation and practices across all sectors.

Mission: Promote economic development by helping to integrate sustainable business practices and innovation into Northeast Ohio's 150 largest corporations.

Goals:

1. Facilitate the adoption of sustainability practices in the Northeast Ohio corporate community to create economic value and optimize the region's natural and social capital assets.
2. Unite the collective leadership voice of Northeast Ohio's corporate sustainability leaders to highlight and apply sustainability values and strategies to regional economic development and civic leadership initiatives.
3. Demonstrate a model of cross-sector collaborative leadership that positions Northeast Ohio as a sustainable solutions leader.

Academic research¹ and our own work experience show that corporations are major drivers of not only economic and technological change, but social change. Sustainable Cleveland's work is leading to a robust "knowledge network" of corporate sustainability leaders and their stakeholders.

¹ Hart, Stuart. *Capitalism at the Crossroads: The Unlimited Business Opportunities in Solving the World's Most Difficult Problems*. Pearson PTR, February 2005. Dr. Hart is a leading thinker on the economic opportunity in sustainability, currently teaching at the Johnson School of Business at Cornell University. On November 8, 2005, Dr. Hart spoke at Case Western Reserve University spoke about his research on the great potential corporations have to improve social and environmental conditions through sustainable economic development.



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Sustainable Cleveland operates on the “Community Action Team,” model, guided by the following principles:

1. We strive to implement the Triple Bottom Line of sustainable development, creating value by integrating and uniting financial, environmental and social assets. Value will be demonstrated through improved competitive advantage, high return on investment, job creation, environmental protection, and strengthening of the social and community fabric.
2. The most robust and innovative solutions result from dialogue and collaborative action among teams comprising multiple stakeholder viewpoints and areas of expertise. We aim to focus on the best solutions, and “hold the center” among stakeholder interests.
3. Sustainability “champions” are critical to implementation of our vision and mission. We seek to support, engage with or create such champions in the corporate and civic arenas.

Sustainable Cleveland’s community action team model is well suited to work as a knowledge network. After five years of study, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) found knowledge networks to be particularly effective in moving forward a sustainable development agenda². Central to our work is strategic relationship management to catalyze and promote *action*, specifically: identifying key players, identifying current and potential roles and contributions, developing and managing working partnerships and collaborations. In short, through knowledge networks, Sustainable Cleveland develops³ ideas into conversations, transforms conversations into stakeholder teams, and guides teams into action.

Our staff, Steering and Advisory Committee members are all chosen based upon the experiences, perspective, knowledge, and relationships they contribute to the dialogue. They include: Steve Percy, retired CEO of BP America, current faculty at the University of Michigan’s Ross School of Business on sustainable business practices, and co-author of the 2005 UN Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report *Ecosystems and Human Well-Being: Opportunities and Challenges for Business and Industry*; Paul Alsenas, Director of the Cuyahoga County Planning Commission and leader of an initiative to develop the Cuyahoga Valley into an example for sustainable commercial, residential, and green development; and Chris Varley, Vice President of NorTech, a non-profit organization driving sustainable technology innovation in our region. Each of our members leverages a wealth of in-kind resources, contacts, and opportunities for collaboration between major organizations from varying sectors.

² Creech, Heather and Terri Willard. *Strategic Intentions: Managing Knowledge Networks for Sustainable Development*. Pg 8. Accessed April 4, 2006: http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2001/networks_strategic_intentions.pdf

³ Sustainable Cleveland is integral to the existence of a successful knowledge and action network around sustainability in Northeast Ohio. The experience of Sustainable Cleveland’s founders and Steering Committee members corroborate IISD’s assertion that “networks require a network manager to run efficiently . . . The manager is in effect a business process manager, whose role is to ensure that the network is implementing its work plan. The manager monitors network activities against objectives³.” Sustainable Cleveland, with our unique mix of expertise, sectors, and areas of influence in the civic and business communities, is well-positioned to act as a knowledge network manager around sustainability in Northeast Ohio.



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Steering Committee Members

Alsenas, Paul
Director
Cuyahoga County Planning Commission

Flynn, Margie
Principal
BrownFlynn

Hart, Colette
Director, Outreach and Business Centers
Cleveland State University Nance College of
Business

Parker, Sally
Principal
currere

Percy, Steve
CEO, retired
BP America

Pim, Terry
Director
Systems Technology Research Institute, Inc.

Salkind, Michael
Principal
Indus International

Silliman, Ken
Chief of Staff to the Mayor
The City of Cleveland

Taylor, Rick
Director of Environmental, Health, Safety
and Energy
Parker- Hannifin Corporation

Thiele, Terry
Regulatory Compliance Counsel
The Lubrizol Corporation

Varley, Chris
Vice President
NorTech



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Initiatives

Measuring Up: NEO 150 Sustainability Benchmarking

Sustainable Cleveland is embarking on a unique study of the corporate sustainability of Northeast Ohio's 150 largest corporations. Not only are the NEO Top 150 Sustainable Cleveland's audience per our mission, but they collectively represent billions of dollars and thousands of jobs. By measuring businesses that leave such a large economic footprint on our region, the achievements and room for improvement illuminated by this benchmarking exercise will be a catalyst for far-reaching change.

Sustainable Cleveland, with our partners, will develop, administer, and analyze the results of a simple benchmarking survey based on categories and metrics common across existing benchmarking programs. We will phrase our questions to "uncover" sustainable practices and behavior, though the practice may not be called such by the corporation. For example, within Sustainable Cleveland's corporate network is one of the largest marketers of sulfuric acid in North America. Though they do not recognize it as "sustainable business practice," a major part of their process is recycling hundreds of millions of gallons of chemicals annually. Within Northeast Ohio, Sustainable Cleveland anecdotally has discovered significant, but unrecognized sustainable practices and behavior.

In order to move forward with our mission of integrating sustainable business practices into Northeast Ohio's 150 largest corporations, it is important to accurately assess where our constituents are today. And by integrating our data into other developing regional assessments, this project is on track to be the nation's first benchmarking of a geographic *region's* sustainability. Through *Measuring Up*, Sustainable Cleveland aims to help integrate sustainability into the region's vision of economic development and prosperity.



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Sustainable Cleveland Corporate Roundtable (CRT)

Convened with the Nance College of Business at Cleveland State University, this group of business leaders meets monthly for peer learning about best practices and innovation in corporate and community sustainability. Sustainable Cleveland serves as a neutral, “honest broker,” offering knowledge resources to assist in participants’ exploration of sustainability and what it means for their businesses. Discussion focuses on enhancing economic, environmental and social values through sustainable practices, products, technology, and strategy.

Steve Percy, retired CEO of BP America and Steering Committee Member, serves as the primary facilitator for this invitation-only forum of participants comprising many of the region’s largest national and multi-national corporate citizens who maintain global or division headquarters in Northeast Ohio. Our round table discussions explore such topics as sustainable supply chains, corporate sustainability models in use today, and business opportunities in climate-friendly technologies.

The Sustainable Cleveland Corporate Round table is a safe space for our members to learn about effective stakeholder engagement, a key piece to corporate sustainability. Our programming runs the gamut of sustainable issues and Ohio industries. The Corporate Round Table has also hosted major speaker events for a wider audience of civic and business leaders:

- September 8, 2004: Sustainable Cleveland and the Corporate Roundtable hosted ***The Impact of Sustainable Business Practices and Corporate Social Responsibility on Shareholder Value***, featuring Hewson Baltzell, the President of Innovest, a global leader in financial research based upon the principle that sustainable business practices are an indicator of strong financial, operational and share price performance.
- November 5, 2004: Sustainable Cleveland and the Corporate Roundtable hosted ***New Approaches on Energy and the Environment: Policy Advice for the President***. Our featured speaker, Paul Portney, was then President and Senior Fellow for Resource for the Future, a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that seeks to improve environmental policymaking worldwide through objective social science research. The talk gave an advanced preview of 25 innovative policy recommendations to be presented to George Bush on November 17, 2004.
- October 18, 2005: Sustainable Cleveland partnered with the Pew Center on Global Climate Change to bring a Pew Center workshop entitled ***Capitalizing on Climate-Friendly Technologies*** to our Corporate Round Table members. Robert Dorsch, Director of Biotechnology Business Development for DuPont, and Randy Overbey, President of Primary Metals Development for Alcoa, were the featured presenters at a special Corporate Round Table meeting prior to the workshop.



Sustainable Systems Industry (SSI)

Sustainable Cleveland is convening a dialogue with TeamNEO, NorTech, and Pew Center for Global Climate Change to determine the feasibility and interest of creating a sustainable technologies economic development “cluster” for Northeast Ohio.

Sustainable technologies can help retool existing Northeast Ohio companies, attract companies with sustainable technology products to Northeast Ohio, and to expand and support local companies to market sustainable technologies both domestically and internationally. We aim to develop a critical mass of companies supporting a particular industry, which can be the basis for attracting other sustainable technology companies to the region.

Key industries represent near-term targets for growth within this cluster includes: clean energy, sustainable water use, green buildings, and urban land recycling (“brownfield” redevelopment).

Sustainable Cleveland originally intended to develop an identifiable and relatively influential network of NEO global corporations and key sustainability stakeholders with demonstrated sustainability successes to have the ability to inform and influence key regional economic development discussions. We set our sights on identifying sustainability opportunities and convening the necessary complement of expertise to add value across the industry sectors already identified by the region’s major economic development organizations. These sectors include:

- Nanotechnology
- Bioscience & Healthcare
- Electronics, Controls & Instruments
- Information & Communication Technologies
- Energy, Power & Propulsion
- Polymers & Advanced Materials
- Advanced Manufacturing

Several key projects are emerging as opportunities in sustainable technologies and practices:

1. NEO Regional Air Quality Attainment State Implementation Planning Process.
2. Regional Energy Strategy initiative, headed by the BP Fellow for Advance Energy at The Cleveland Foundation
3. Ohio Climate-Friendly Technologies, a project of the Pew Center on Global Climate Change



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Northeast Ohio Wind Farm and Manufacturing (NOW)

On January 10, 2006, Sustainable Cleveland was the convener of a daylong work session on the possibility of a utility-scale wind farm in Northeast Ohio. Hosted by the Cleveland Foundation, this meeting brought together 40 representatives from government, policy research organizations, multinational corporations, civic groups, community foundations, and wind developers to explore collaboratively what it would take to make such a project a reality.

The NOW conversation is leading to strategic team-building around a manufacturing cluster to support a local wind development, and for exporting wind power products and services to other regions of the world. Sustainable Cleveland has begun leading discussions with our corporate and civic partners about the potential to reenergize regional manufacturing to create a center for wind turbine and component manufacturing. A half-dozen regional companies already manufacture components for this industry, primarily for export to Europe.

Partners joining in our conversation to date include: the Cleveland Foundation, The Cuyahoga County Port Authority, the Great Lakes Science Center, Greater Cleveland Partnership, Ohio Consumers' Counsel, Ohio Department of Development, experts from the Ohio environmental community, several members of Sustainable Cleveland's Corporate Round Table, and a worldwide manufacturer of wind turbines.

Potential project partners moving forward: Pew Center on Global Climate Change, NorTech, TeamNEO, The Cleveland Foundation, Leadership Cleveland, Greater Cleveland Partnership, Cleveland Convention and Visitors' Bureau, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission (Cuyahoga Valley Initiative), Cleveland State University Nance College of Business.