

## Program Description

The Greater Kansas City Climate Protection Partnership, coordinated by the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, offers businesses and organizations the opportunity to lead the community toward the complementary goals of reduced regional greenhouse gas emissions and increased economic competitiveness.

Greater Kansas City area employers are in a unique position to contribute to solutions to address climate change. Innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial talent—all in abundant supply in the Kansas City area business community—are essential to success. The relationships employers enjoy with their customers, partners, and employees are crucial to communicating the changes needed to effect positive change.

Members of the Greater Kansas City Climate Protection Partnership enjoy benefits that include technical assistance in assessing and reducing their climate change impacts in ways that may reduce costs and open new market opportunities. Other benefits include lessons shared by fellow members and recognition as leaders in responsible management.

Ultimately, businesses and institutions join the collaboration to reduce greenhouse gas emissions because they have a shared interest in making economic investments that can potentially improve the environment. The risks associated with carbon emissions, both environmental and regulatory, have increased and the economic advantages presented by technologies that can help shape the solution to climate disruption are creating opportunities to make changes today.

Partners agree to the following:

- 1. Assess the potential impacts of climate change on the long-term economic value and vitality of their organization**
- 2. Reduce their own organization's greenhouse gas emissions by taking action**
- 3. Collaborate with other members of the Greater Kansas City Climate Protection Partnership and take actions, jointly and individually, to help the community support sound policies and legislation that apply to greenhouse gas emissions and energy use**

## 4. Work to grow and strengthen the Greater Kansas City Climate Protection Partnership

### Guiding Principles

The Greater Kansas City Climate Protection Partnership was founded on the principles of making Kansas City a more livable community while also providing innovation and expertise to make Kansas City truly *America's Green Region*.

The topic of climate change has garnered great attention over the past few years. Board members of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce felt that the region should take a proactive, not reactive, action on such an important matter. It was because of that commitment that the partnership was founded in November 2007.

The Climate Protection Partnership was created to not only require member companies to accurately assess their current carbon footprint; it also requires them to take tangible steps to reduce their carbon footprint by lessening their greenhouse gas emissions. Clearly such actions will have a demonstrative effect on improving the region's air quality and will provide greater sustainability for the area as members utilize less energy and reuse scarce resources.

In addition, adopting the goals of the partnership will allow Kansas City to be on the cutting edge of the "green" movement. As one board member puts it, we are experiencing a "green tsunami"; those who are prepared for it will do well, while those who fail to prepare will have difficulty with the transition. Kansas City is fortunate to have some of the most leading edge energy and sustainability firms already within its region, including Burns & McDonnell Engineering, Kansas City Power and Light and BNIM Architects. These entities partnered with the Chamber to put together the framework of the partnership, to create the proper infrastructure to make the partnership a success, and to monitor the partnership to help to respond to partners' needs and questions.

The Climate Protection Partnership is an accomplishment because it couples the principles of sustainability with innovation in economy. In the past there had been some trepidation whether those two goals could work simultaneously, however it has become abundantly clear that not only can they work together, the synergy of those two principles can have a dramatic effect on improving the lives of all Kansas Citians.

### Context

The dire predictions about climate change and its effects on the Earth and its inhabitants are very unsettling. Experts warn of negative consequences to human health, biodiversity and ecosystems, water resources, energy production and agriculture and our food supply.

On April 27, 2009 President Barack Obama stated "*our future on this planet depends on our willingness to address the challenge posed by carbon pollution.*" Earlier, he made his feelings clear on the issue by making energy and sustainability projects a cornerstone of his Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Clearly carbon-reduction policies will be at the forefront of U.S. policy for the foreseeable future.

By establishing the Climate Protection Partnership in November 2007, Kansas City is at the vanguard of the movement to reduce carbon emissions and address climate change. The partnership has already 168 member companies representing well over 100,000 employees. Once these members incorporate greenhouse gas reduction strategies within their organization, it will clearly help the worldwide movement to reduce carbon emissions.

## **Innovation and Excellence**

Historically, business has been seen by many environmental groups to be an obstructionist force when it comes to climate change and sustainability efforts. However, this was not the case in Kansas City. The leadership of the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce were visionaries when it came to sustainability and carbon reduction strategies. Instead of waiting for mandatory cap and trade system or a carbon tax, they proactively formed the Climate Protection Partnership to address the issue head-on and to provide its members with tangible tools to help their companies reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The partnership provides each member with a carbon footprint calculator, an easy to use form that allows companies to input their current energy usage and get an accurate number of their carbon footprint. In addition, the calculator is a dynamic tool that allows individuals the ability to input changes in behavior (e.g. commuting, less business travel, different energy usage) to show what effect such changes would have on reducing their current footprint.

The partnership also provides a free onsite assessment, where experts in the field of energy audits visit the partner's facility and create an extensive energy assessment form that gives practical solutions on how the entity can take steps to reduce their current greenhouse gas emissions.

Finally, the Climate Protection Partnership sponsors seminars throughout the year to educate members on sustainability and climate issues. Seminar topics have included a return-on-investment seminar, a "how to" on filling out their carbon footprint and energy assessments forms, and a question and answer session from a nationally known journalist who is considered an expert on climate change and public policy.

## **Performance**

The Greater Kansas City Climate Protection Partnership has achieved great success without any concerted marketing. The partnership continues to grow by word of mouth recommendations of current members.

The current 168 member companies come from all areas of the region from both Kansas and Missouri, including large corporations, small businesses, non-profit entities and governmental agencies on the local and state level. The partnership has facilitated connections among groups that ordinarily might not interact. No matter what their business operation, whether it is a small business that wants to adopt more green business practices or a large engineering firm that generates millions of dollars of business doing energy retrofit projects, each is held in equal standing within the partnership and is afforded the same level of service within the partnership.

The results of the partnership are very evident. Over 85 facilities, comprising over 58 million square feet, have been assessed as part of the onsite energy audit. The reports generated from those onsite audits will lead to a substantial investment in energy retrofits to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions within Kansas City. From a more anecdotal standpoint, Climate Protection Partners have stated that they have already begun to adopt policies to reduce their carbon footprint by recycling, installing CFL lighting, carpooling, telecommuting and investing in alternative fuel vehicles in their fleet.

Another benefit of the partnership is the positive public relations and marketing opportunities the partners gain by participating in the effort. Such a commitment is appealing to both clients and employees.

To generate even greater performance and sustainability of the partnership, the Climate Protection Partnership announced in April 2009 that it would have three levels of engagement available and would now collaborate with technical assistance partners (TAP) to provide more expertise to member companies. The new TAP members will focus on recycling, transportation and facility management and will provide best practices advice in these areas for partner members to achieve a more green status in their organization.

## **Cohesiveness**

The Climate Protection Partnership works hand in hand with other regional efforts to help the environment. Specifically, the partnership has collaborated greatly with the City of Kansas City, Missouri's Climate Protection Plan. The City of Kansas City asked the business community to provide benchmarking data on its current greenhouse gas emissions and provide a reduction goal to be met by the year 2020. A small committee comprising members of the partnership were able to generate data estimating the current footprint for Kansas City businesses and estimating efforts could be taken to reduce emissions by 18.72% by the year 2020.

Furthermore, many of the activities undertaken by members of the partnership to reduce their carbon footprint will have beneficial effects on Kansas City's air quality. The region currently has several "Ozone Alert" days in the summer which could lead to greater regulation by the Environmental Protection Agency. Representatives from the Climate Protection Partnership have met with representatives of the EPA to talk about the initiative and work on collaborating on training efforts that could lead to a reduction in both ozone emissions and greenhouse gas emissions.

## **Replicability**

The Greater Kansas City Climate Protection Partnership could be easily replicated throughout the nation by Chambers of Commerce or governmental agencies. To that end, the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce is working on creating and disseminating a climate protection "toolkit" that will be delivered to the 100 largest Chambers across the nation. The toolkit will be delivered in the summer of 2009.

Besides housing all the pertinent information needed to replicate the partnership in their own communities, the toolkit will include a challenge from Kansas City leaders to other regions throughout the nation to also work to reduce their carbon footprint.

