

Municipal Environment Initiative

MEI

Sponsored by St. Louis County Municipal League

Volume 1, Issue 1

March 2009

Positives of Trees:

- Trees help purify the air we breathe by absorbing pollutants.
- Trees increase property values and improve the tax base in communities.
- Trees improve neighborhood appeal, attracting businesses, shoppers and homeowners.
- Trees cool our cities and towns by reducing heat generated by buildings and paved surfaces.
- Tree shade, properly placed, can save an average household up to \$250 annually in energy costs.
- Trees reduce the amount of pollutants in sewer systems, saving communities millions of dollars in water treatment costs.
- Trees soften harsh building lines and large expanses of pavement, making urban environments much more pleasant.
- Trees provide habitat for birds and other wildlife, maintaining a balance with nature even in urban areas.
- Trees reduce the amount of water borne pollutants that reach streams and rivers.
- Trees reduce levels of domestic violence and foster safer, more socially neighborhood environments.

-USDA Forest Service

Municipal Environment Initiative

Welcome to the first Municipal Environment Initiative (MEI) segment of the St. Louis County Municipal League monthly newsletter. Citizens, businesses, manufacturers, and governments are increasingly interested in incorporating the environment into decisions and actions. The MEI has been created to provide and connect municipalities with quality environmental information, to promote green practices, direct municipalities to funding resources, and give municipalities a way to be engaged with one another.

Municipalities have the ability to utilize green initiatives to:

- reduce our dependence on foreign oil
- save money
- promote your community by creating a healthier, active place for people to work and live
- preserve natural resources
- encourage businesses and citizens to be environmentally conscious through policy, incentives, and education
- create jobs
- make the community more sustainable

In order to facilitate municipalities with their efforts to achieve these goals, the MEI has also created a Yahoo Group

called stlmei which stands for St. Louis County Municipal Environment Initiative. This list-serve is another way for municipalities to share information with each other and ask questions of each other. The Yahoo Group is a great way for communities in St. Louis County to be in dialogue about green issues. The Yahoo Group already consists of cities such as Rock Hill and Clayton as well as Focus St. Louis which is working on an environmental guidebook specific to the region. If you are interested in the Yahoo Group, email staff@stlmuni.org and you will receive an invitation to join.

Ameren UE Energy Efficiency Programs

Ameren UE has begun its Business Energy Efficiency Programs. Any non-residential facility wanting to make environmentally friendly and energy efficient changes are free to apply. Ameren UE will award a total of twenty-four million dollars to

different commercial, industrial, or public/private institutional facilities. If you are interested in receiving money for energy upgrades please call 866-941-7299 or visit www.ameren.com/BIZefficiency. Ameren UE will offer your busi-

ness financial incentives for installing energy efficiency technologies, suggest energy tips that are no-cost or low-cost, and provide information on energy efficiency concepts and technologies.

ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability

Environmental stewardship, particularly energy independence and conservation, is rapidly becoming mainstream. More and more cities are joining the already 1000 plus cities that have become members of the organization ICLEI-Local Governments for sustainability. Creve Coeur, Olivette, University City, and a few others from the St. Louis area have all added their names to that list.

The resources provided by ICLEI allow for an indepth and comprehensive look at what your municipality does and what it can do. Its software program is particularly helpful because it guides a city through many steps in a logical manner.

ICLEI is a membership organization that focuses on helping local governments address climate protection and sustainable development. On ICLEI's website (www.icleiusa.org) the importance of climate protection is advocated for saying, "Local governments control the day-to-day activities that determine the amount of energy used and waste generated as well as the long term planning of the community- from zoning and land use to control over building codes and licenses, infrastructure investment, municipal service delivery and management of schools, parks and recreation areas. Local government leaders are also

uniquely positioned to influence citizen behaviors – their transportation options, energy consumption patterns and general consumer decisions." Many benefits of implementing green initiatives have been exposed over the past years. Again ICLEI provides a bullet point list of these benefits:

- Save taxpayer dollars through energy efficiency and transportation initiatives
- Build the local economy and create jobs (demand for energy efficient services and products, competitive edge)
- Improve air quality and public health
- Invest in long-term community livability
- Connect cities to national leaders and resources
- Inspire community engagement
- Create a legacy of leadership

In short, your municipality can save money, increase health, reduce dependence on oil, and create jobs all through environmental initiatives.

To further highlight the need for these actions in the region, the St. Louis area is the number one most challenging place to live with asthma in the country. The St. Louis Post-Dispatch wrote on January 28, 2009 about the dire situation stating that nearly 1 in 8 people have asthma in St. Louis; and

that due to air quality, public smoking laws, pollen scores, and nine other criteria St. Louis is the worst place to live with asthma. This issue is just one area of need in the St. Louis region. Air quality affects the health of our communities, and green initiatives can help reduce the problem.

Along with improved air quality, ICLEI is a great tool in dealing with many different issues. ICLEI has a five step action plan for cities to deal with a multitude of environmental issues. First, conduct a baseline emissions inventory and forecast. Creve Coeur has done this. This allows a city to know exactly where it stands on energy usage and emissions. Second, adopt an emissions reduction target. Third, develop a local climate action plan. Fourth, implement policies and measures. Fifth, monitor and verify results. When you become a member of ICLEI, you are given the software needed to complete all the assessments. You also get access to all other ICLEI materials, information, and guidance. The ICLEI system allows for local governments to chart their progress and keep track of money saved as well as projected savings and emissions reduced. The more municipalities that participate and use ICLEI, the better the St. Louis region can assess its current situation and chart its progress. The benefits for our communities will be numerous.

Green Guides

As the environment becomes more of a focus throughout the United States, many sources of information are being made available. The Environmental Protection Agency has some fantastic information for municipalities and their Energy Star program is a great help as well. The Green Build Council also provides easily accessible infor-

mation that is free to view. The MEI will be highlighting information from these sources in future newsletters but here are some of the links if you wish to look now.

- **Municipal How-To Manuals**
<http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/greeninfrastructure/munichandbook.cfm>

- **Green Building/ Neighborhoods**
<http://www.greenplaybook.org/>
- **Energy Efficiency**
<http://www.energystar.gov/>
- **Green Building/Jobs**
<http://www.usgbc.org/>