Johnson County, IA
Summary of Activities

Action Plans:

Johnson County Iowa, just today, has become a member of the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI). We are also planning to join the Cool County Initiative. We believe this will help us in the development of a Climate Action Plan and an Energy Management Plan. We do not have a “key” person to turn to regarding these kinds of initiatives other than our Facilities Department, though we are looking at the possibility of developing an employee/citizen committee.

Buildings:

Johnson County Iowa is just in the initial phase of joining many others on the green revolution bandwagon, even though we have done some things to address ways to protect our environment. After communicating with our Facilities Manager, some of the things we are currently doing include, recycling of paper, cardboard, some plastic, light bulbs, batteries, and metal. Our Conservation Department has also addressed numerous areas to promote green initiatives, including a new county waterways tangle-free program. When we get bids for our county wide paper purchases we require that all bids be for paper with a minimum recycle content of 30%, all toilet paper and paper towels have post consumer content. Johnson County is also in the process of building a new Health and Human Services Building, a new Paratransit Bus Garage, a new office building for Secondary Roads and the Paratransit Bus Service, and a new Secondary Roads shop. In the next 5 years, we are developing plans for an update of the current Administration Building, a new Justice Center, including a jail, along with a Conservation office building and shop, a new Ambulance Facility, and likely two new parking structures. Our Facilities Manager believes the county is taking a holistic approach to sustainability with our new building projects. One of the first things to be noted is the fact that we will be bringing many of our departments under one roof with a County Campus concept. Currently, many of these departments are currently spread from one end of town to the other. This means clients spend a lot of time either driving or riding on a bus traveling to the different agencies in order to receive the assistance they need. By moving everything to one location, we will be helping the environment through decreased fuel consumption and emissions, not to mention time. Energy will also be saved by moving out of old inefficient buildings and into a new efficient building. Our new Health and Human Services building will be placed in relationship to the sun, maximizing the southern exposure. Some of the things that will be included in the sustainability of the new building are designing the building to maximize use of building materials, use of super insulation in the building envelope, design, placement and efficiencies of windows, the use of day lighting and light shelf techniques to maximize natural light while cutting down on solar gain in the summer. Use of high efficiency HVAC systems will also be used. We will be using products with recycle content when possible, this could include carpet, wall coverings, and furnishings. Our new Paratransit / Secondary Roads office structure is also in the design phase to include geothermal.

Vehicles:

In regards to vehicles, Johnson County is also in the process of developing a bio-diesel committee that is inventorying our vehicle fleets. Our Sheriff is buying new efficient vehicles for detective and civil staff as well. We have just formed our first Trails Advisory Committee and a Parking Policy Committee that is looking at the possibilities of developing incentives for people to bus, bike or walk to work. There is more that we could be doing and we will need help doing so.

Environment:
Johnson County has developed a Sensitive Areas Ordinance, a Clustered Subdivision Ordinance and a Native Plant Community Policy. (If you would like more information on these, please let me know).