

## Local Government Sustainability Initiatives

Together We Build, January 26, 2022

by Thomas Beck, AIA, NCARB

If there is to be progress in slowing the increase of planetary temperatures, which has been scientifically proven to be among the major causes of increasingly extreme weather events, drought, and wildfires, we must think globally and act locally. Here in Northern Colorado we see local efforts to address our carbon footprint in a variety of actions. In Estes Park, the Estes Sustainability Task Force (ESTF), appointed by our town government, just wrapped up the report of their recommendations. Soon the report will be available to the public, and on February 8<sup>th</sup> the report will be presented to the Town Board. The Board will then consider what next steps to take in relation to the Task Force recommendations. We encourage you to read the recommendations when available to the public before the February 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, and strongly ask the Town Board to act on them.

The Larimer County government is in the midst of an initiative called Climate Smart Larimer County (CSLC). (<https://www.larimer.org/climate-smart>) In 2020 they developed a framework, and in late 2021 conducted a survey of Larimer County residents and business owners, for which a summary is available. (<https://www.larimer.org/climate-smart#tab4>) The summary tells us that there were 21-55 Estes Park respondents of 559 responses reported by zip code. It is encouraging that 82% of Larimer County respondents are taking actions or would like to take actions to reduce our impact on climate.

There is a wealth of information on the CSLC website about the process, information gathered so far, and areas of focus. Resources include a September 2020 full report, and a 2021 Framework Summary. The Framework Summary (<https://www.larimer.org/climate-smart#tab5>) gives us a profile of our county's Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG). In 2017 the largest sources of GHG were vehicles (62.8%) and buildings (33.8%). A chart of the number of days in Fort Collins reaching 95 degrees and higher shows that between the years 1900 and 1999 (nearly a century) we averaged two 95-plus-degree days per year. The average from the years 2000 to 2016 jumped to nine days per year.

Through May 2022 CSLC will continue community outreach. The next step is to conduct workshops online (via Zoom) over four days in February during which the community will participate "to help us review and prioritize a series of preliminary climate friendly strategies that may affect you, your family, and/or business." Each scheduled day will include two workshops in English, and one in Spanish. One can register to participate in as many workshops as desired. Or one can wait until February 8<sup>th</sup> when a questionnaire will be released that will "mimic all questions asked in the workshops." The workshops are scheduled for February 8-9, and February 15-16. The four topics are:

- Our Homes & Economy
- How We Move
- Nature & Land
- Our Wellbeing

To register: <https://survey.alchemer.com/s3/6691061/Climate-Smart-Community-Workshops-Registration>

The CSLC Task Force is comprised of designees who represent a broad swath of industries, organizations, and municipalities. Representing Estes Park is Jason Damweber, our Assistant Town Administrator.

Among the respondent comments, made both by skeptics (18%) and those willing to make an effort (82%) in the CSLC survey summary, were statements along the lines of small individual actions don't matter. We need to help people revise that thinking. For example, say one drinks beverages out of aluminum cans. Maybe one per day. If that can is recycled that is 365 cans per year that do not end up in the landfill. If everyone in the population of Larimer County, 369,377 people as of 2021, were to recycle one can per day for a year, that would add up to 134,822,605 cans. Nearly one hundred thirty-five million. Our small actions, when added together with those of our neighbors, can make a big difference.

Beck, Thomas W., Together We Build, “Local Government Sustainability Initiatives”, *Estes Park Trail Gazette*, Friday, January 26, 2022, <https://www.eptrail.com/2022/01/26/together-we-build-local-government-sustainability-initiatives/>