

Profile



Mayor Fred Sissine

Maryland Town Forges Energy Efficiency Legacy

Fred Sissine, mayor of the City of Mount Rainier, MD and leader of its Rebuild America partnership, is seeing the fruits of his labor after years of hard work to bring about

economic revitalization and sustainable development for his City.

Mount Rainier, which is located near Washington, DC, has initiated nine measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions during the past 10 years. Six of these measures have focused on energy efficiency, while others include alternative fuel projects and tree planting to achieve carbon sequestration.

Mount Rainier is hampered by the neglect and decay common to many older, “main street” U.S. communities that have lost businesses to suburban-style shopping malls. Challenges include rising crime, declining property values, shrinking tax revenues, and escalating operating costs for police and code enforcement.

A Bootstrap Effort

Sissine presided over a “bootstrap” effort to revitalize the city with a special focus on its main street. These efforts included creation of a national



Mount Rainier's City Hall incorporates a variety of energy-efficient features.

historic district, a stable funding mechanism for the business association, a new city staff position focused on economic revitalization, and a new community development corporation. With this stronger organizational structure in place, new partnerships with the state and county became possible. Mount Rainier secured major state funding under Gov. Parris Glendening's "smart growth" programs that address commercial building rehabilitation to eliminate blight.

By bringing in experts from Rebuild America, ENERGYSTAR® and other programs, Sissine helped the City's decision makers see how energy-efficient building design and technologies could substantially reduce long-term operating costs while supporting Mount Rainier's goals for main street historic preservation and economic revitalization.

Initiatives in planning or underway in Mount Rainier include energy-efficient new construction as well as retrofit work to existing buildings. One retrofit project will incorporate green energy features into an apartment building that provides housing for low-income artists.

Green Police and Fire Stations

In 1996, the City began planning a police station that combines historic

preservation practices with a broad array of energy efficiency and other "green" design features. It serves as a good example of adaptive re-use — the blighted building was once an auto dealership.

Energy consultant John Spears of Sustainable Design, Inc., says the design goal is to reduce energy demand to least 50 percent below the ASHRAE standard. Further, the project aims to attain a "silver" rating on the guidelines for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) developed by the U.S. Green Building Council. The design concept includes a clerestory for natural day lighting and passive solar heat gain, highly rated roof insulation, and a high-efficiency HVAC system.

In 1996, the City issued a bond to begin the project. Jack Werner of Rebuild America offered guidance on features and technical assistance. The project is moving to a detailed design phase and then to construction with completion expected by mid-2001.

Mount Rainier has also participated in planning for the construction of a new fire station for Prince Georges County. With help from County Councilman Peter Shapiro and a citizens advisory group, the City has pushed for energy-efficient measures in the building and site design. As a result, the county's architect is using the LEED criteria to plan the facility.

In March 1999, Sissine worked with the Mike Lawson of Councilman Shapiro's staff to organize a "green" building briefing for the county councilman, fire chief, and other county staff. The briefing incorporated green building experts from Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland Energy Administration, U.S. Green Building Council, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of

Energy (DOE).

This led to a peer exchange visit for county officials and the project architect to a fire station renovation project in Arlington, VA, that employed the LEED criteria. One result of Prince Georges County's involvement with this project was a decision to become a Rebuild America partner earlier this year. A preliminary estimate suggested that energy-efficiency design and equipment might cut energy consumption at the fire station by as much as one-fourth to one-half the baseline, yielding savings of \$7,500 to \$15,000 per year and a CO₂ emissions reduction of between 77 tons and 154 tons per year. Construction could be finished by late-2001.

In Mount Rainier, several governmental energy-efficiency projects are now finished or in progress. Private sector involvement in residential and commercial sector projects is now getting underway.

Sissine began serving on the Mount Rainier City Council in 1990, and has served as mayor since 1993. He had previously served as president of the local historic preservation group and as secretary of the local business association. He has made presentations on economic revitalization at Maryland state conferences, testified for Gov. Glendening's smart growth legislation, and made presentations on local government energy measures and climate change at conferences sponsored by EPA and DOE.

For more information, contact Fred Sissine at 301-927-2125 or e-mail dsissi@erols.com