AGENDA
November 10, 2011

I. Approval of Minutes from October (attachment)

II. Citizen Comment (Please sign in)

III. Ongoing Business/News/Updates (15 minutes)
   a. City Code, C. Caneva
   b. Environment Board Roster (attached)
   c. 2012 Meeting Schedule, P. Finnegan and S. Besson (FOR ACTION)
      Second Thursday of each Month (no August meeting)
      January 12
      February 9
      March 8
      April 12
      May 10
      June 14
      July 12
      September 13
      October 11
      November 8
      December 13

IV. Disposable Bags – Update and Next Steps (15 mins)

V. Multi-Modal Plan – (15 mins)(attachment)
   a. Updates - H. Bartling, C. Hurley, C. Caneva (bike infrastructure budget since 2008; police enforcement/education; change in number of bike parking spaces in downtown over past years)
   b. Bike Corrals – H. Bartling
      Consideration of formal recommendation to Transportation/Parking Committee regarding bike corrals (attached)

VI. 2012-2013 Strategic Plan Development, P. Finnegan and S. Besson (60 minutes)
   a. Review By-Laws – (attached) - FOR ACTION
      i. Article II, Section 1: “Mission”
      DRAFT Mission: To investigate environmental issues and develop policy recommendations, for submission to City Council, on matters affecting the
environmental health and the sustainability of Evanston and City operations, including air, water, waste, transportation, energy efficiency, and public education.

ii. Article II, Section 2: “Guiding Principle”

DRAFT Guiding Principle: To support the implementation of the environmental components of the City of Evanston’s guiding documents (including Strategic Plan, Climate Action Plan, Multi-Modal Transportation Plan, Bicycle Plan) through research, policy recommendations, and coordination with other groups’ efforts.

b. Discuss Evanston 150 Recommendations

c. 2012-2013 Goals and Objectives
   i. Transportation: Bikes and the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan
   ii. Board Effectiveness (working sub-groups, more regular communications with Council/other groups)
   iii. Other ideas (water issues, commercial composting, incentives for deconstruction, for ex.)

d. Assignments and Next Steps

VII. Open Discussion

NEXT MEETING – Thursday, December 8, 2011
Evanston Environment Board  
Thursday October 13, 2011  
7:00 pm  
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center, 2100 Ridge Ave., Room #2200

Members Present: Paige Finnegan, Susan Besson, Kevin Glynn, Anne Viner, Laurie Zoloth, Ellen King, Jill Franklin, Hugh Bartling

Members Absent: Likwan Cheng, Suzanne Waller

Staff Present: Carl Caneva Division Manager, Catherine Hurley Sustainability Coordinator

Community Members Present: Thomas Owen, Christina Washam, Alison Burdo, Lingi Zhang, Elizabeth Miller, Zach Glaser, Alicia White, Andrew Hobaugh, Mike Dreninan

Presiding Members: Paige Finnegan, Susan Besson

MINUTES

I. Call to order and declaration of quorum. There being a quorum, the meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

II. Approval of minutes from September 8, 2011. Motion to approve L. Zoloth, 2nd by E. King. Passed unanimously.

III. Citizen Comment (Please sign in)

a. Students from the Roosevelt Institute at Northwestern University (NU) introduced themselves as a policy group. They are working to eliminate plastic bags at NU and decrease use of disposals. The students favor an outright ban of plastic bags instead of a recycling program. A survey aimed at students intended to identify plastic bag behavior will be distributed Oct. 21, 2011. Statistical analysis from the survey will be available November 11, 2011. More information can be found on their website http://baglessnu.wordpress.com/. L Zoloth suggested distributing the survey to faculty as well via the faculty senate.

IV. Ongoing Business/News/Updates

a. City Code, Carl Caneva
   i. No new information was available.

b. 2012 Meeting Schedule
i. Board agreed to set the meetings as the 2nd Thursday of each month and to review the 2012 calendar by the November meeting in order to identify any scheduling conflicts. Members agreed there would be no meeting in August.

ii. H. Bartling updated PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy http://pacenow.org/blog/), a bipartisan, local government initiative that allows property owners to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy products for their homes or commercial buildings. It is a voluntary program; owners can opt in to receive financing that is repaid through an assessment on their property taxes for up to 20 years. H. Bartling indicated some municipalities have begun to work with 3rd parties for financing and cited an article appearing in the New York Times leveraging private funds (attached). Chair Finnegan stated the legislation has passed. C. Hurley stated she is unaware of any communities that have gone forward to create PACE districts.

a. Stormwater Management
   iii. Chair Besson reported she and L. Cheng participated in the Sept 22 walk on Sheridan Road with City staff to survey/discuss opportunities to incorporate stormwater management elements (bioswales, permeable pavement, etc.). Chair Besson requested a follow-up report on next steps.
   iv. Chair Finnegan indicated a desire to see a menu of items for stormwater management on future projects similar to the LEED system.
   v. Members agreed this topic could be further discussed as a City policy recommendation within the Board’s strategic planning.

b. Chairs Besson and Finnegan attended the Oct. 3 Rules Committee; an item on the agenda was to consider an Environment Board member on the Transportation/Parking Committee (TPC). Members of the Rules Committee asked that the question be considered by the full TPC. TPC will consider this appointment at its October 26 meeting.

c. Bike Plan Update
   vi. E. King updated members. She and H. Bartling had been working with Evanston merchants with a plan to place a bike corral in front of the Evanston Athletic Club. It was their understanding the issue would be discussed at the TPC at the July or August meeting. This did not take place. Instead, unbeknownst to them, bike racks were installed down the street and signage was placed at the parking meters indicating the location of the rack. Board members objected to this news, as it does not further the goals of the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan (to facilitate bike parking), and instead could discourage bike use in the downtown. Additional concerns were voiced by Board members because the City of Evanston Municipal Code indicates: *No person shall park any bicycle in such a manner as to constitute a hazard to pedestrians, traffic or property* (Title 10 Chapter 9-6), and this may allow the city to impound bicycles improperly parked. C. Hurley was asked for the economic impact of the corral; she stated each space earns approximately $3000.00 in revenue annually.
   vii. A. Viner suggested the board draft an official recommendation to the Human Services Committee, Transportation/Parking Committee, and/or City Council regarding bike corrals.
V. Disposable Bags

a. J. Franklin and L. Zoloth presented their formal recommendation to the Board with regards to plastic bags (attached). At the conclusion of their research, they recommend a $.05 fee for plastic bags of which $.02 goes to affected retailers and $.03 to the City. The recommendation calls for a 6-month education, during which businesses and the public could be prepared and businesses could exhaust stock. J. Franklin suggested free reusable bags be distributed as part of the education effort. J. Franklin and L. Zoloth spoke with Dick Peach and Citizens’ Greener Evanston as well as merchant groups to review the practicality of the proposed fee. There are also exemptions. Reduction or elimination of single-use bags is one of the recommendations of the City’s Climate Action Plan.

b. L. Zoloth stated the recommendation represents a ‘middle-of-road’ plan and is a compromise between and all-out ban and a $.25 fee called for in an earlier proposal. The fee creates an incentive.

c. L. Zoloth indicated Santa Monica has a full stop, ban on plastic bags, and is contiguous with other cities, similar to Evanston.

d. Chair Finnegan asked was this true of bulk items or meat? L. Zoloth indicated there was no expectation of bags to be provided by the merchant.

e. K. Glynn asked how the fee would be collected. The members indicated an administrative plan would be a discussion for a later date.

f. Chair Finnegan and J. Franklin spoke about Washington DC & the fee offsetting some monies expended by the city.

g. H. Bartling asked if Downtown Evanston or the Chamber of Commerce were involved in the conversation. J. Franklin indicated they did not talk to the Chamber. H. Bartling asked how the business community would be brought on board.

h. L. Zoloth indicated she didn't think the fee would be a deterrent to shoppers because patrons come to Evanston looking for a particular good or wanted a neighborhood store.

i. H. Bartling is concerned with not consulting the area businesses. Chair Finnegan indicated the plan was to have a stakeholder advisory group, and have the onus of administration be on the City.

j. A. Viner stated prior to voting the Board needed to invite the stakeholders in. She agreed with parts 1-4 and introduction of the recommendation.

k. Chair Finnegan indicated a desire to add number 5 in the details section about the ordinance sunsetting.

l. H. Bartling asked why is there specific numbers regarding the fee? Why not indicate a fee without specific numbers?

m. A. Viner indicated the fee amount is a starting point and will be discussed to gauge comfort and appropriateness. She is aware of other communities charging more.

n. A. Viner suggested a section entitled legislation/implementation giving direction; this would then be brought to the Human Services Committee.

o. Chair Finnegan stated a need for an assessment after 2 years.

p. A. Viner did not support the idea of assessment due to possibility of fighting the ordinance within 24 months. Suggested renewing at three years and an automatic renewal if no objections or concerns.

q. S. Besson stated concern about discussions with the merchants as they are lacking in the recommendation. She stated concern with the rationale as well,
saying that it reads like a whereas. She said she thinks there should be a
description as to why these recommendations were chosen.
r. C. Caneva indicated if the recommendation was to be voted on the amendments
should include motions and votes.
s. L. Zoloth summarized the changes.
t. A. Viner motioned to approve recommendations 1,3,4 as written seconded by K.
Glynn. Motion passed unanimously.
u. A. Viner motioned to amend the recommendation, #2 be stricken and relocated
within the document as implementation, seconded by L. Zoloth. Motion passed
unanimously.
v. A. Viner motioned to amend the recommendations a 4th recommendation “two
years from the effective date of the ordinance it is automatically renewed for
another 2 year term” L. Zoloth seconded. Motion unanimously approved.
w. A. Viner requested a moment of discussion, as she did not feel the rationale
section needed to be relocated. She suggested including language to reference
other plastic bag legislation.
x. L. Zoloth suggested the reason for the $.05 is it represents a compromise and is
a fee instead of a ban. J. Franklin added it is a choice.
y. A. Viner indicated stressing other ordinances of this nature have been enacted.
z. A. Viner motioned rationale section of the memo be supplemented to include
explanatory information including individual choice, comparison of other cities,
and why the implementation period has been selected, seconded by K. Glynn.
The motion passed unanimously.
aa. A. Viner motioned to approve recommendation memo consistent with prior
motions to be presented to council on October 17, 2011. Motion seconded by
Chair Besson. Motion passed unanimously.

VI. Strategic Plan Review,

a. Chair Finnegan gave a strategic planning presentation to the board, outlining the
last plan (slides attached). The board has been tasked with updating the plan by
September 5, 2012.
b. H. Bartling asked where the Green House Gas levels were at. It was his
understanding that by 2012 Evanston should be at 7.5%. C. Hurley municipal
operations reduced by 22%, transportation use increased by 2%. C. Hurley gave
an update at the end of 2010.
c. S. Besson stated it was her preference for the Board to make short and brief
recommendations to the Evanston City Council or standing committees of the
Council. L. Zoloth agreed with this recommendation.
d. S. Besson indicated a desire to amend the Board’s by-laws, as the current
description of the Board’s purpose seems antiquated.
e. L. Zoloth suggested reviewing the 150 ideas (http://evanston150.org/) for
Evanston and advocate for those directed at the environment. She is interested
in using vacant land for gardens and prairie. She noted a strong support for bike
paths and urban gardens.
f. K. Glynn read the times to vote on Evanston 150.
g. S. Besson requested that Board members consider ideas for next month’s
discussion of the strategic plan, including the 150 ideas, and bring back items
they are interested in for discussion.

VII. Meeting was adjourned at 9:03pm

VIII. NEXT MEETING – Thursday, November 10, 2011
Memorandum

To: Wally Bobkiewicz, City Manager
From: Carl Caneva, Division Manager, Health Department
        Catherine Hurley, Sustainable Programs Coordinator
Subject: Plastic Bag Recommendation from Environment
Date: October 24, 2011

At the request of Alderman Fiske, below summarizes the responses to a set of questions related to the Environment Board’s recommendation for reducing the environmental impacts of shopping bags in Evanston.

1. Which local merchants did the Environment Board consult regarding the bag tax?
2. What was the response from each merchant?
3. What was the response from the Chamber of Commerce?
4. What was the response from Downtown Evanston?

Response, Questions 1-4: The Environment Board spoke with Dick Peach who is active in the Chamber, Rotary and who works at a small business. He is very connected with the business community through these affiliations. We also spoke with Michael Drennan. Both Dick and Michael had already had significant communications with businesses about this issue so we gleaned information from them.

The Environment Board came away with three main concerns from the business community:

i. We learned that the business community is concerned about being less competitive and thus losing business to nearby communities. This is especially a concern on Central Street and the Green Bay Dominicks.
ii. They are worried about being the “fall guy” and it is recommended that marketing/publicity materials make very clear that it is City policy, not store policy, to charge a fee for bags.
iii. They are concerned about this being a paperwork and accounting hassle.

5. Is carryout food subject to the tax or just "left-overs?"

Response: The Environment Board has not specifically addressed this in their recommendation and are still considering whether carryout food would be subject to the fee.
6. What about pizza boxes?

**Response:** The Environment Board is not recommending a fee for pizza boxes.

7. If you buy meat at the grocery store (where it may be wrapped in deli paper) and place it in a bag with other items, is the entire bag exempt?

**Response:** The Environment Board has not specifically addressed this in their recommendation and are still considering how to address bags for meat and deli items.

8. Other than the tax itself, what is the true cost to small retailers to comply, i.e. software upgrade, reporting, accounting, training, etc?

9. Other than the tax itself, what is the true cost to large grocery chains to comply, i.e. software upgrade, reporting, accounting, training, etc?

10. Will this tax make Evanston businesses more or less competitive with similar businesses in surrounding communities?

11. To comply with this tax, how will consumer prices in Evanston be affected? Go down? Go up? Stay the same?

12. With there be an economic development fund created to subsidize the cost of compliance for small businesses?

13. How much revenue does the City of Evanston expect to collect from this tax?

14. Will all revenue be passed along to the Ecology Center or will some go into the General Fund to cover the costs of processing and enforcement?

15. Who will monitor the fund and decide how monies will be allocated? The private Evanston Environmental Association or the city?

16. According to our Economic Development Department, what effect will this tax have on consumer behavior?

17. Will this tax make consumers more or less likely to shop in Evanston? Or are shoppers so fed up they will just go elsewhere to avoid the hassle?

18. Will this tax make retailers more or less likely to locate or remain in Evanston? Or are retailers, especially small retailers, so fed up they will just go elsewhere to avoid the hassle?

19. What happened to Alderman Grover’s request that the Environment Board report back on the merits of education vs. legislation?

20. How is this not just an additional tax on doing business in Evanston?

21. Bag police - who will enforce and how?

22. What are the fines and penalties?

23. Why not voluntary compliance coupled with education (a large percentage of Evanston consumers use recycled bags)

24. What is the budget for the city providing reusable bags?

25. And, finally, how does this make Evanston more business-friendly?

**Response, Questions 8 – 25:** The Evanston Environment Board was tasked with reviewing work already put forth by residents and community groups and was asked by the Administration and Public Works Committee to provide their recommendation on how to reduce plastic bags in Evanston. After reviewing those documents, the Board voted to recommend a $.05 fee with some exceptions and acknowledging that additional outreach and stakeholder engagement would be needed to write a specific
ordinance. The recommendation is intended for discussion and is expected to solicit questions and direction from City Council on how best to move forward.

Questions 8 thru 25 are excellent and identify many outstanding concerns and issues. These questions were not specifically addressed in the Environment Board’s work this summer. Should City Council wish to continue their consideration of a bag fee, these questions would help guide the Board and City of Evanston Staff with regards to the research and community engagement necessary for moving the recommendation to a successful and inclusive ordinance.
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*Committee Co-Chairs
Memorandum

To: Honorable Members of the Evanston Environment Board

From: Carl Caneva, Division Manager, Catherine Hurely Sustainability Programs Coordinator

Subject: Responses to Board’s Multi-Modal Questions

Date: November 7, 2011

Per the Board’s request for information, the following information was obtained by staff:

I. Bike Infrastructure beginning in 2008

The Engineering Department stated that there is no set budget for bicycle infrastructure improvements. Various funds have been used to purchase and install bike racks, add bike lanes, restore existing bike lanes, based on the recommendations of the Bicycle Plan and the Multi-Modal Plan.

Expenditures beginning in 2008:

- Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program was used to purchase and install bike racks in the downtown area – cost about $40,000
- Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program was used to purchase about $8,000 worth of bike racks at other commercial areas; which were installed by Streets staff.
- Bike racks were added in the Maple Avenue and Library streetscape projects.
- Bike Lanes were added on Central Street using pavement marking funds.
- Bike Lanes on Dodge were added and existing lane markings were redone under the Water Main project.
- Bike lane markings/chevrons were done on Sheridan Road (south end) under the resurfacing project.
- Public Works Improvement fund has been used to purchase bike racks.
- EECBG grant is being used to purchase bike racks - $10,000
- Bike Lane on Emerson Street was redone under the resurfacing project.
- Bike racks were added on Clark Street under the sidewalk improvement project.
- Twiggs Park Improvement –which included bike path - $341,000
- Lakefront Bike Path construction cost - $1,161,000.
II. **Status of Police Enforcement/ Education around bikes**

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<td>2011</td>
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(*Year to Date)

**Bike Education Initiatives**

Participated in “Bike the Ridge “

**Registration Efforts**

- 2009 150
- 2010 86
- 2011 38 YTD

Three YTD = 274

**PSA’s – Bike Safety & Bike Theft Prevention**

**Facebook – Bike Safety & Theft Prevention**

**Community List Serves – Bike Safety & Theft Prevention**

III. **Number of Bike Spaces in Downtown**

The City of Evanston, in collaboration with volunteers, completed an inventory of bicycle parking facilities across the community in 2011. These bicycle rack locations were used to enhance the city’s bicycle route map and over 500 copies of the updated map have already been distributed in the community. The following data was collected as part of the inventory process and represents the total capacity of the bicycle racks in Evanston.

**Total City of Evanston Bicycle Parking Capacity:**
- 922 – Not including Northwestern University west of Sheridan
- 1564 – Including Northwestern University racks west of Sheridan

**Estimate of bicycle capacity found within the borders of Emerson, Hinman, Lake, and Ridge (not including Northwestern University racks west of Sheridan):**
- 484 - Not including Northwestern University west of Sheridan
- 1126 – Including Northwestern University west of Sheridan
Bike Corral Demonstration Project: a Proposal for Downtown Evanston

The City of Evanston has undertaken multiple complementary planning initiatives in recent years to improve the quality of life of its residents, improve the business climate, and promote environmental sustainability. Evanston is known as a livable city that embraces policy innovation and is a national leader in areas related to planning and transit-oriented development.

This proposal seeks to build on that reputation by proposing a demonstration project to improve the bicycle infrastructure in Downtown Evanston by constructing an on-street bike corral.

A bike corral involves swapping a single on-street car space for bike parking. Bike corrals are low-cost and low-impact street modifications that can improve the visibility of bike infrastructure, improve pedestrian safety on Downtown sidewalks, and help to encourage bicycling as a convenient and viable mode of transportation.

Bike corrals are being deployed in cities throughout North America like San Francisco, Portland, Oregon, Northampton, Massachusetts, and Salt Lake City. They have been popular with residents, businesses and visitors.

Downtown Evanston is well-suited for bike corrals. Several plans adopted by the City Council in recent years discuss the need to improve the Downtown bike parking infrastructure. The Multi-Modal Transportation plan notes that there is a surplus of automobile parking Downtown and encourages both increasing the supply of bike parking and creating incentives for no-emission vehicles. The Downtown Plan notes a limited supply of bike racks and envisions enhancements in bike and pedestrian mobility. The Evanston Climate Action Plan also calls for more bike parking in the Downtown district.

The City has been proactive in installing bike racks in recent years—both Downtown and throughout the city. A bike corral project will be further evidence of the City's commitment to improving bicycle infrastructure.

Bike corrals also have ancillary benefits that will improve Downtown. First and foremost, on-street bike parking will likely result in safer sidewalks for pedestrians. On-street bike parking will provide cyclists a place other than the sidewalk for bike parking, reducing conflict between cyclists and pedestrians and making Downtown streets more walkable and pleasant. The prominent spectacle of the bike corral will serve to remind Downtown visitors that bike parking is available and attractive, making people realize that biking is a sensible transportation option for Downtown trips. More cycling infrastructure will result in less congestion Downtown, resulting in a cleaner, safer environment for all residents and visitors.

Bike corrals can take many forms. Keeping in mind ongoing streetscape improvements and branding initiatives led by Downtown Evanston, this proposal seeks to complement the efforts
underway by incorporating planters and inverted-U style bicycle racks.

The material cost estimates for the bike corral are as follows: 6 bike racks at $263/each ($1578), 5 concrete planters 48"x18"x20" at $391/each ($1955). Prices for the bike racks were estimated based on the City's 2010 purchase of Dero bike racks. Prices for concrete planters were based on P-series model from Commercial Service Supply (http://www.commercialservicesupply.com). Total material costs: $3533.

Material costs could be likely be reduced if road bollards are substituted for planters. The latter is common in other cities. The cost estimate listed above does not include installation or plants and planter upkeep.

Figure One is a conceptual drawing of a bike corral that could be implemented in Evanston. Figure Two is a more minimalist example from Portland, Oregon and Figure Three is an example of a public art approach to bike corrals from Long Beach, California.

Figure One

![Figure One](image1.png)

Figure Two

![Figure Two](image2.png)
Reports from all over the country suggest that bike corrals are successful in providing convenient parking for cyclists and creating more engaging streetscapes and business districts.

For this demonstration project, care should be taken to determine the most advantageous location. Because of their dual advantage of improving sidewalk aesthetics and mobility as well as providing important cycling support, Evanston's first bike corral should be situated near businesses that generate significant amounts of traffic and have the greatest potential for sidewalk and streetscape enhancement. Possible sites are depicted in Figure Four and could include Benson Avenue between Church and Clark, Maple Avenue between Church and Clark, Chicago Avenue at Church St., Sherman Avenue between Lake and Grove.
Bike corrals are relatively quick to install once the materials and labor power are assembled. It would be ideal timing to have a bike corral system up and running by the week of May 14-18, 2012 when the League of American Bicyclists sponsors its national Bike to Work Week. This annual event generates significant media attention and would be a good time for the city to introduce its innovative concept to Evanston residents.

For more information, please contact Hugh Bartling, Associate Professor, Public Policy Studies, DePaul University, 773-325-4960, hbartlin@depaul.edu
BY-LAWS

EVANSTON ENVIRONMENT BOARD

ARTICLE I

Name and Authority

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be the Evanston Environment Board, referred to herein as “the Board.”

Section 2. The Board exists under the provisions of the Evanston City Code, Title 2, Chapter 13.

Section 3. The business of the Board is conducted in accordance with Evanston City Code, Title 2, Chapter 13 and the Ethics Ordinance 54-O-04 (Title 1, Chapter 10), and these By-laws.

ARTICLE II

Mission

Section 1. The purpose of the Environment Board is to investigate activities that affect the environment, including but not limited to: air pollution, waste, water, noise pollution, and pesticides and to develop policy recommendations on environmental issues for submission to the City Council. (36-0-71)(23-0-93)

Section 2. The Board shall support the implementation of the Evanston Climate Action Plan through research, public awareness, and policy recommendations as well as through coordination with other groups’ efforts.
ARTICLE III

Membership and Duties

Section 1. Members

A. Number of Members: The Board shall consist of thirteen (13) members appointed by the Mayor of Evanston with the consent of the Evanston City Council.

B. Qualifications:

1. Members of the Board shall be residents of the City of Evanston who are interested in and committed to the preservation and enhancement of all aspects of the environment in which people in the City of Evanston live and work.

2. The members appointed shall have training and/or experience in areas, such as environmental law, education, pollution control, engineering, science and public health. (Ord. 23-0-03)

3. Term of Office: The term of each member of the Board is four (4) years from the day of final action by the City Council approving the appointment or until their successor is appointed and qualified. No member shall serve more than eight consecutive years.

C. Vacancies and Removal

1. If a Board member fails to attend three (3) consecutive regular Board meetings, or misses four (4) meetings in one calendar year, without a reasonable cause, or otherwise neglects his or her duties as a Board member, the Chairperson, with the assent of the Board, may recommend to the Mayor that the seat be declared vacant.

2. Any vacancy shall be filled by the Mayor as soon as possible.

3. A member of the Board may be removed by the Mayor for absenteeism, neglect of duty, misconduct or malfeasance in office, after being given a written statement of the charges and an opportunity to refute them at a hearing with the Mayor.
Section 2. Duties of the Board

The Board has the following powers and duties:

A. The Board shall report to the Human Services Committee of the City Council, and shall periodically meet with the Human Services Committee to discuss the Board's activities, goals and objectives.

B. To research, study and hold public hearings on environmental issues raised by the City Council, the Board, the City Manager, City departments, other governmental agencies or the public.

C. To develop public awareness on environmental issues through hearings, meetings, newsletters, news media releases and cooperation with environmental education organizations.

D. To serve as an environmental advocate for the residents of Evanston.

E. To develop policy recommendations on environmental issues for submission to the City Council, including, when appropriate, suggestions regarding implementation of policy.

F. To serve as a resource for the City Council, Council committees, boards or commissions, the City Manager and City departments in addressing environmental issues, providing advice, research or technical assistance, as requested.

G. To keep itself informed about the activities of other City boards and commissions so far as these relate to environmental matters. The Environment Board may work jointly with the Energy Commission and other Evanston boards and commissions in addressing environmental issues which are of mutual concern, including, but not limited to, the development of a City energy policy.

H. To serve as a liaison with other municipalities' boards or commissions to learn how they deal with matters of interest to the Environment Board and to share information pertaining to those matters. (Ord. 23-0-93)
ARTICLE IV

Officers

Section 1.  Elected Officers

The elected officers of the Board shall consist of two Co-chairs.

Section 2.  Election of Officers

Board members shall elect officers by majority vote at the June meeting of odd years.

Section 3.  Terms of Office

The Co-chairpersons shall be elected for two-year terms from July 1 to June 30. No member shall serve more than three consecutive two-year terms as an officer.

Section 4.  Vacancies

A vacancy in any office shall be filled by a vote of the Board at the next regular meeting following the occurrence of the vacancy. The officer is elected for the duration of the unexpired term.

Section 5.  Duties of Officers

A. The Co-chairpersons shall assure that the policies, programs and orders of the Board are carried out.

B. One Co-chairperson, or their designee, shall preside at all meetings of the Board.

C. The Co-chairpersons shall be responsible for calling meetings of the Board pursuant to the Open Meetings Act and for assuring an agenda for each meeting.

D. The Co-chairperson may appoint committees to consist of two or more members for specific tasks.
ARTICLE V

Meetings

Section 1. Regular and Special Meetings

A. Regular meetings shall be held at such times and places as decided by the Board and shall be held at least quarterly.

B. Special meetings shall be held upon the request of the members of the Board.

C. Notice of all regular and special meetings of the Board shall be communicated to the members at least one week before the meeting by action at a previous meeting, or by e-mail, mail, or telephone.

D. Meetings shall be open to the public in accordance with the ordinance of the City of Evanston and the Open Meetings Act.

E. Notice of all regular and special meetings of the Board shall be communicated to the public by publication of an agenda in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

F. Closed executive sessions may be held to consider matters relating to personnel, pending litigation, or property acquisition, or any applicable exemption pursuant to the Open Meetings Act.

Section 2. Quorum

A majority of the members of the Board constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 3. Voting

At any meeting at which a quorum is present, the affirmative vote of the majority of the members present shall carry any issue. The Co-chairpersons are voting members of the Board and may vote on any issue.
Section 4. Parliamentary Procedure

Unless inconsistent with these By-laws or otherwise decided by the Board, all meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Robert’s Rules of Order.

ARTICLE VI

Staff of the Environment Board

Section 1. The City shall employ staff who shall be responsible for the administrative direction and execution of the Board’s policies, goals and objectives, and the administrative direction and execution of the policies of the City. The Board may evaluate the performance of the staff so assigned annually and report same to the City Manager.

Section 2. The staff of the Board shall be responsible for taking and distributing the minutes of each meeting, pursuant to the Open Meetings Act.

Section 3. The staff of the Board shall be subject to the terms and conditions of employment for City of Evanston management staff, as established by the City Manager and City Council. Board members shall transmit any concerns or comments about the performance of the staff of the Board to the City Manager.
ARTICLE VII

Amendments

Section 1. These By-laws may be amended at any meeting of the Board by the affirmative vote of a majority of members in office. Written notice of proposed amendment(s) shall be given to all members at least two weeks prior to the meeting at which the amendment(s) is/are to be considered.

Section 2. Any proposed amendment(s) to the By-laws shall be included in the call to the meeting at which they will be voted upon.

Section 3. The City Manager shall be advised of any changes in these By-laws.

Section 4. The Board shall review its By-laws at least every two years.

Adopted on December 10, 2009
Amended on January 14, 2010
Abstract

In October 2006 the Evanston City Council voted unanimously to sign the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and the City quickly moved to develop an Evanston Climate Action Plan (ECAP). The plan was developed as a collaborative effort between the City and the community including representatives from Evanston institutions, residents, businesses and existing sustainability groups. The ECAP was developed with input of over 130 community members and includes more than 200 strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions across the community.

The City’s Office of Sustainability has been working since 2008 to implement projects and programs which support the ECAP with the goal of reducing the City’s emissions by 13% by 2013. The ECAP is the roadmap for sustainability efforts in Evanston and has brought focus, collaboration, and structure to various organizations within the community and the municipal government.

The entire Evanston community has been engaged in the implementation of the ECAP and the results are visible. To date Evanston as a community has initiated, completed or is in progress implementing over 110 of the 200 strategies with activities at both the municipal and community wide level. Since the implementation of the ECAP, the City’s municipal operations efficiency activities have resulted in a 22% reduction in municipal greenhouse gas emissions below the 2005 baseline. At the community wide level, efficiency projects and education and outreach have resulted in a smaller reduction in emissions associated with energy usage, although efforts continue.

Implementation activities continue in 2011 with specific focus on reducing emissions associated with energy usage and transportation activities. The City is committed to achieving more reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and continues to fund the full-time Sustainable Programs Coordinator to facilitate and lead the City’s sustainability and carbon reduction efforts.
Narrative

The City of Evanston, Illinois is a diverse community located on the west shore of Lake Michigan with nearly 75,000 residents and is home to Northwestern University and the international headquarters of Rotary International. With approximately 800 employees, Evanston provides many services to the community that require significant infrastructure including a water treatment plant, fleet of recycling trucks, extensive snow removal equipment, large fire and police squads, and several community centers. The library is a department of the City as well as the Parks and Recreation facilities and services. The community is a vibrant place to work and live with many establishments to shop, eat, relax and find entertainment.

The quantity of reductions in municipal greenhouse gas emissions over just a few years represents the deep and wide-spread efficiency efforts that have been implemented by City staff. In addition, the reduction in emissions from community energy usage represents efforts from across the community in a variety of areas. A description of key activities implemented from the ECAP in each main category are provided below.

Transportation

Multi-Modal Transportation Plan - In April 2009, the Transportation Division of the Public Works Department adopted the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan (MMPT) to shape long-range planning efforts for the future transportation system. The plan addresses all transportation modes: walking, biking, transit, and driving. Section 12 of the MMPT, “Sustainable transportation systems, when designed properly, help the community as a whole to think, plan, and act in a manner that addresses the root causes rather than the symptoms of environmental problems associated with air pollution, energy conservation, transportation infrastructure and vehicular use.” Planning efforts of the MMPT and Climate Action Plan overlapped to ensure that the efforts were complimentary. Recommendations included in the MMPT were the direct result of goals within the Climate Action Plan.

Green Fleet Program - As a part of the Climate Action Plan, the city has made efforts to transform its motor vehicle fleet into a green fleet to minimize its environment impact. Cleaner fuel and more efficient vehicles help the environment and reduce expenditures for the City. The City has purchased 17 replacement vehicles in 2009. Additionally, by analyzing vehicle and equipment use patterns across departments, the city was able to consolidate and reduce the fleet size by 11 vehicles by the end of 2009. Between the 2005 base year and 2010, the City of Evanston reduced its carbon emissions by 427 metric tons through switching its diesel fleet to biodiesel and resizing.

Car Sharing - Both the Climate Action Plan and the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan support expanding and promoting car-sharing programs such as I-Go Car Sharing and...
Zipcar. Both currently serve Evanston with seven cars in the I-Go fleet and six cars in the Zipcar fleet throughout the city. In 2009, the transportation division placed additional I-Go and Zipcar locations in parking garages and surface lots.

**Bicycle Parking** - The City of Evanston has initiated a bicycle rack installation program as recommended in the Evanston Bicycle Parking Report, beginning with bicycle racks in downtown locations. This report focuses on bicycle parking needs in downtown Evanston and transit stations and recommends a total of 178 racks. In 2008, fifty bike racks were added to downtown Evanston.

**Energy Efficiency and Buildings**

**Green Building Ordinance** - The City of Evanston was the first of a few cities nationwide to adopt a citywide green building ordinance that adheres to the USGBC “LEED” (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Rating System. This ordinance requires that all new commercial, multi-family and municipal constructions over 20,000 square feet achieve LEED Silver certification through the US Green Building Council. City Staff have continued to refine the Green Building Ordinance and adapt it to meet the needs of both sustainability and economic development.

The City is also incorporating green building into municipal building projects. In February 2009, Evanston’s Fire Station #5 reopened with green improvements. The City employed Muller & Muller Architects, Inc. to design the fire station, directing the company to meet basic LEED requirements. Instead, the architects surpassed this basic certification to attain Silver LEED certification. Green aspects of the building include a wall for vines and storm water collection and reuse for washing trucks.

**Municipal Operations Efficiency** - One area of significant effort and reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is a result of the Municipal Operations Efficiency program. City staff from several departments have participated in making City operations more efficient including staff from Public Works, Utilities, and Facilities Management. Since implementing the ECAP, all departments of the City including those listed have gone above and beyond to reduce energy use, improve efficiency and take advantage of State and Federal grants. To date, several lighting projects, HVAC upgrades, and operational changes have been made which have resulted in a 22% reduction in municipal greenhouse gas emissions below the 2005 baseline.

**Residential Energy Efficiency** – The City of Evanston has been working towards our goals of reducing residential energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions with several activities and initiatives. One of the most popular programs has been the Residential Weatherization Grant Program which was made possible through the City’s Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant as part of the Federal Stimulus program. Qualifying residents received an energy audit and a contractor to weatherize their home for free. To date 46 units have benefited from this program and nearly $250,000 has been spent.
The City has also done extensive outreach to residents to help them save energy and money with the distribution of compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). From November 2008 to November 2009, the City of Evanston distributed 15,000 CFLs through various City centers, departments, and programs. CFLs were distributed at the Ecology Center, as well as in the Health Department, Community Development Department, and Police Department. Additionally, CFLs were distributed by the Citizens for a Greener Evanston (CGE), Northwestern University students, and several affordable housing providers.

The City has also partnered with the Citizen’s Utility Board Cub EnergySaver for programs focused on residential energy efficiency. In January 2011, Evanston residents rose above other Illinois communities to win an energy efficiency campaign with the Citizens Utility Board and were presented with the “Super Savers Award” for saving the most energy and having the most registered participants. On behalf of the community, the city accepted 21,560 compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL’s) which will be given out to community members in the new energy efficiency campaign being conducted in 2011 called the “Big Seven Saver’s Challenge.”

For the entire year of 2011, the Big Seven Evanston employers are competing to see which team can get the most members and which team can save the most energy. The Big 7 are Evanston Township High School employees, NorthShore University HealthSystem, City of Evanston employees, Rotary Energy EconoMisers, St. Francis Hospital, Northwestern University employees and School District 65 employees. Each one of these teams is going to be using CubEnergySaver.com, the nation’s first free online service that gives households a plan to save hundreds of dollars a year, tracks savings by connecting to power bills, and actually rewards families with movie tickets, gift cards, museum passes, and other items for documented reductions in their electricity usage.

Overall, this category saw reductions in all three areas of focus between the 2005 base year and 2010. The City of Evanston municipal government reduced its CO2 emissions by 4,882 metric tons. Evanston’s residential sector reduced its CO2 emissions by 4,669 metric tons. Evanston’s commercial sector reduced its CO2 emissions by 9,252 metric tons.

Renewable Energy Resources

**Solar Project at Water Treatment Plant** - In spring of 2009, the Evanston Water Plant recruited two groups of students from an Engineering Design and Communications course at Northwestern University. The two groups were asked to research a renewable energy technology to determine its feasibility for powering the Water Plant. One of the groups researched solar photovoltaic (PV) systems, while the other group of engineering students looked into on site wind technologies. Both groups considered availability, capacity and costs to identify the best system for the Water Plant’s power generation. Based on the student’s recommendations, the Water Plant submitted a
request for funding to the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation (IL CECF) and was awarded funding for a 25 kW solar PV system. The project was completed in 2010 and is now producing renewable energy for the City’s Water Treatment Plant.

Since its installation in October 2010, the Water Treatment Plant’s solar installation has generated 9.58 MWh of electricity which has helped the Water Treatment Plant offset its carbon emissions by 7 metric tons of CO2.

Waste Reduction and Recycling

Curb-side Recycling Container Upgrade - The City of Evanston implemented a citywide residential recycling expansion program: a recycling container upgrade from 18-gallon bins to 65- and 95-gallon roll carts. The program was divided into four phases, based on the four waste pick-up routes. Not only will the new containers contain materials better (they have lids), they will also provide greater capacity and ease for material collection. According to a study done by the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC), communities typically experience a diversion rate increase of 2 to 12% when switching to larger capacity roll carts. Evanston’s 2008 residential diversion rate was 41%.

E-Recycling Events - In an effort to limit the negative environmental effects of electronic waste, the City of Evanston hosts an annual electronic waste recycling collection event. In the first year, the City collected 98,409 pounds (49.2 tons) of electronic waste during the 4-hour event and has collected more each additional year. Eight semi-trucks transported this waste to the CRT Processing recycling facility in Janesville, WI. In 2011 the event will be expanded to include collection of other recyclable items as well as document destruction, recycling education and outreach and display of public works vehicles for the public to experience.

Land and Water

Green Alley - Construction on the City of Evanston’s first environmentally friendly alley was completed in fall 2008 and has been under observation and monitoring to better understand its application for city-wide use. It is located on the north side of Dobson St. This green alley includes eight inches of porous concrete pavement that allows storm water to permeate the surface and infiltrate the soil underneath. The water is then returned to Lake Michigan instead of the sewer. This project will reduce flooding in buildings along the alley and keep excessive water out of the City’s sewer system. Porous concrete also serves as a natural filter, keeping unwanted debris out of the City’s water.

Collaboration with Northwestern University - In response to the City’s goal of reducing carbon emissions by 13% by the year 2012, an Environmental Engineering student at Northwestern University performed an investigation on the role of trees in the City’s carbon cycle. The investigation approximated the amount of CO2 and air pollution
potentially sequestered by Evanston’s urban forest. According to Bernado’s report, the City’s trees store at most 7,300 tons of carbon per year, representing less than 1% of greenhouse gas emissions in Evanston. The study also found that Evanston’s trees are projected to take up 100 tons of atmospheric pollutants each year. This number potentially saves the City $500,000 by preventing damaging polluting effects. The report calls for the City to begin collecting information concerning “the specific nature and timing of climate change projected in this region and what trees may be best adapted for the new conditions.”

Water Conservation – The City currently promotes water conservation and efficiency on the City’s website. The City annually promotes EPA’s Fix a Leak Week and National Drinking Water Week. Additionally, the City has passed an outdoor watering ban during certain hours of the summer along with a resolution in 2010 to reduce pest control and pesticide use on all city-owned and -managed property. In the Spring of 2011 the City was awarded a Local Technical Assistance Grant from the Chicago Metropolitans Agency for Planning to receive assistance to develop a comprehensive water conservation program and implementation plan. This work will build off of the work completed to date and further define the steps that the City and community should take in order to reduce the City’s water usage.

Food Production and Distribution

Farmers markets - The Evanston Community continues to promote local food production and distribution through 4 farmer’s markets and the City’s community gardening program. Two of the markets are held on Saturdays and two are held on Wednesdays. The markets are supported by the Friends of Evanston Markets which was founded in 2010 as a not-for-profit volunteer organization of Evanston citizens striving to increase the visibility, popularity and prosperity of Evanston's farmers' markets. The farmers markets also serve as an opportunity to educate the community about the benefits of eating fresh, locally grown foods.

Community Gardens – The City of Evanston provides 220 community garden plots to rent each year for Evanston residents from March through mid-November. City Staff provide organizational assistance and support to the community gardeners who have plots at one of 4 community garden locations spread conveniently across the city.

The Talking Farm - The Talking Farm is a nonprofit green organization in Evanston, founded in 2006 whose mission is to operate a sustainable urban agricultural enterprise that provides fresh and locally grown food, job training, environmental education and related research. Its vision includes both a physical space to grow food for sale to the community, as well as educational and knowledge sharing activities that regarding operation of an urban, organic farm dedicated to establishing sustainable food practices with the Evanston community. In 2009, the Talking Farm gave presentations, taught classes, and designed and created several edible gardens.
Policy and Research
One goal of the Climate Action Plan was to “secure and leverage funding” through local, state, and federal grants. In September 2009, the City of Evanston was rewarded with the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG), a formula grant of $749,700 from the Department of Energy. The City has three years to spend this funding. In its EECBG application, the City specified thirteen projects to put this funding towards. The total estimated project cost for these thirteen projects is $1,256,649; the EECBG will offset more than half of these costs. In total, these projects have an estimated annual energy savings of 1,101,304 kWh and 72,013 therms, an estimated annual greenhouse gas reduction of 9,224 MTCO2e, and an estimated annual utilities savings of $124,663.

Conclusion
The ECAP identified strategies for reductions in community wide greenhouse gas emissions for both the entire community as well as municipal operations. Since that time, staff have been looking for low-cost and high return on investment projects that could help reduce emissions within municipal operations. In addition, City staff have worked with community groups and the general public to create awareness on actions and steps that can be taken to reduce emissions at home, at work, and across the community.

The biggest challenge faced in the last 2 years has been the economic difficulties that have impacted municipal operations. Budgets have been cut and staff reduced. Staff applied for and received multiple grants to help implement projects both for municipal operations and out in the community.

The City of Evanston is not subject to an environmental enforcement action or notice of violation from the U.S. EPA or Illinois EPA.
Evanston MTCO$_2$e Emissions By Source 2005 (Baseline Year)

- Municipal
- Residential
- Commercial
- Transportation
- Waste

MTCO$_2$e Emission Goal and Estimated Reduction Targets

- 1990: 7%
- 2005: 11%
- 2012: 13%
- 2020: 17%

Electric, Natural Gas, Gasoline, Biodiesel, Solid Waste, Recycling, Organic Waste
Community Wide Emissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>2005 CO2 Emissions</th>
<th>2010 CO2 Emissions</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential Electricity</td>
<td>154,524</td>
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<td>Rail Electricity</td>
<td>18,785</td>
<td>19,366</td>
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<td>Commercial Natural Gas</td>
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<td>Diesel</td>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Totals Without Transportation</strong></td>
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Municipal Emissions

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<td>Electricity</td>
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<td>Biodiesel</td>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>24,560</strong></td>
<td><strong>19,251</strong></td>
<td><strong>22% Reduction</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Energy Usage

The chart shows the energy usage in metric tons of CO2 emissions for the City of Evanston, residential community, and commercial community for the years 2005 and 2010. The commercial community has significantly higher emissions compared to the other two categories, with a noticeable increase from 2005 to 2010.
Tax Plan to Turn Old Buildings ‘Green’ Finds Favor

By JUSTIN GILLIS

A business consortium that includes Lockheed Martin and Barclays bank plans to invest as much as $650 million over the next few years to slash the energy consumption of buildings in the Miami and Sacramento areas. It is the most ambitious effort yet to jump-start a national market for energy upgrades that many people believe could eventually be worth billions.

Focusing mainly on commercial property at first, the group plans to exploit a new tax arrangement that allows property owners to upgrade their buildings at no upfront cost, typically cutting their energy use and their utility bills by a third. The building owners would pay for the upgrades over five to 20 years through surcharges on their property-tax bills, but that would be less than the savings.

The consortium is led by a company called Ygrene Energy Fund of Santa Rosa, Calif., which has already won an exclusive contract to manage a retrofit program for a half-dozen communities in the Miami area, with the city expected to join in a few weeks. It is in the late stages of completing a contract with Sacramento, and is seeking deals in other cities.

State and city officials are optimistic they may have found a way to tackle one of the nation’s biggest energy problems — waste in older buildings — without new money from Washington. If enough building owners sign on, private capital would be put to work paying for retrofit projects that promise to save local businesses money while creating thousands of new construction jobs.

“We are so used to reaching our hand out and saying, ‘Washington, we need this,’ and ‘Tallahassee, give us that,’ ” said Edward MacDougall, the mayor of Cutler Bay, Fla., a Miami suburb that took the lead in setting up the deal in that region. “This is really a home-grown mechanism where we don’t need to do that.”

The consortium was put together by the Carbon War Room, a nonprofit environmental group based in Washington set up by Richard Branson, the British entrepreneur and
billionaire, to tackle the world’s climate and energy problems in cost-saving ways. With the United States government nearly paralyzed on climate policy, he said, his group is seeking a way forward.

“We see this as the first of hopefully many, many, many projects, and a big step in the right direction,” Mr. Branson said in an interview last weekend in New York.

In the past three years, half the states have passed legislation permitting energy retrofits financed by property-tax surcharges, and hundreds of cities and counties are considering such programs. While the situation poses some risks, and programs aimed specifically at homeowners have run into a snag, many jurisdictions are moving forward with plans to focus on commercial properties.

Environmental groups have lauded the trend as one of the most exciting developments in years regarding climate change. They point out that wide use of such programs could cut emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide from power plants by reducing electricity demand.

“It’s a big deal,” said James D. Marston, head of energy programs for the Environmental Defense Fund, a group that has worked with Carbon War Room in developing the approach. Over the long haul, he said, “we’re talking about tens of billions of dollars in investments, and energy savings that are 10 times that amount. If you do this correctly, you would be able to shut down a third of the coal plants in the country.”

While that may take a while, there seems to be little question that the new approach could draw substantial private capital into the market for energy upgrades, which have historically been difficult for many midsize and smaller businesses to finance.

As envisioned for Miami and Sacramento, the plans will work like this:

Ygrene and its partners will gain exclusive rights for five years to offer this type of energy upgrade to businesses in a particular community. They will market the plan aggressively, helping property owners figure out what kinds of upgrades make sense for them. Lockheed Martin is expected to do the engineering work on many larger projects.

The retrofits might include new windows and doors, insulation, and more efficient lights and mechanical systems. In some cases, solar panels or other renewable power might be included. For factories, the retrofits might include new motors or other gear.

Short-term loans provided by Barclays Capital will be used to pay for the upgrades. Contractors will offer a warranty that the utility savings they have promised will actually
materialize, and an insurance underwriter, Energi, of Peabody, Mass., will back up that warranty. Those insurance contracts, in turn, will be backed by Hannover Re, one of the world’s largest reinsurance companies.

As projects are completed, the upgrade loans, typically carrying interest rates of 7 percent, will be bundled into long-term bonds resembling those routinely issued by governmental taxing districts. Barclays will market the bonds. Retirement funds have expressed interest in buying these bonds, which will be repaid by tax surcharges on each property that undergoes a retrofit.

Perhaps the most serious risk is that fly-by-night contractors will be drawn to the new pot of money, pushing energy retrofits that are too costly or work poorly.

“Contractors are cowboys,” said Dennis Hunter, chairman of Ygrene. He promised close scrutiny of the ones selected for the Miami and Sacramento programs.

Ygrene is one of about a dozen start-up companies around the country pursuing such deals. The company appears to have substantial momentum, but some of its competitors have already stumbled, telling property owners they qualified for retrofits but then failing to deliver the necessary short-term financing. Still, many people are optimistic this approach will get off the ground.

“This is a game-changer,” said John D. Kinney, whose company, Clean Fund of San Rafael, Calif., has raised $250 million to invest in such projects. The company just used the technique to help finance a large solar installation at a development called Sonoma Mountain Village in Rohnert Park, Calif.

Experts point out that, with modern techniques and equipment, a retrofit can typically cut a building’s energy use so much that the project pays for itself in as little as five years. The most famous recent example was the refurbishment of the Empire State Building, which cut energy use by nearly 40 percent, turning it into one of New York’s greenest buildings.

The new financing approach is called Property Assessed Clean Energy, or PACE.

For decades, cities and counties have created special taxing districts to finance improvements that benefit private property, such as street lights or sewers. Bonds are issued to pay for the projects, then repaid with surcharges on tax bills. If an owner sells, the surcharge stays with the property.

Several years ago, the city of Berkeley, Calif., hit on the idea of using that approach to finance energy upgrades on private homes. The idea took off, and 25 states and the District...
of Columbia soon passed PACE legislation. One of the most successful programs to date has been in Sonoma County, Calif., where retrofit projects exceeding $50 million have been financed.

While the initial focus was on homeowners, those programs slowed last year when an arm of the federal government that oversees the mortgage market took a hostile stance toward such projects on residential property, on the grounds that they add risk to mortgages. In most states, a lien associated with a retrofit project would have to be paid ahead of the mortgage if the property went into foreclosure.

A legal and political battle is under way to try to force the Federal Housing Finance Agency to reverse its stand. So far, it appears that PACE programs for commercial properties pose fewer legal complications.