

S Seven Generations Ahead

Promoting Sustainable & Healthy Communities



Seven Generations Ahead



Mission

Founded in 2001, Seven Generations Ahead's (SGA) mission is to promote the development of ecologically sustainable and healthy communities.

Our Work

SGA works with local government, community and private sector leaders to help communities make the changes they need to create a healthy and sustainable future. SGA's work covers a broad range of sustainability topic areas, including:

- energy efficiency and renewable energy
- transportation
- healthy community development
- waste reduction
- water conservation
- green business
- procurement
- local, sustainable food
- healthy eating
- open space and ecosystem enhancement
- sustainability education

Through community-wide sustainability planning and implementation, project design and implementation, educational conferences and forums, statewide, regional and local network development, consulting and programs, SGA is a catalyst for local community solutions to global environmental issues.

Our Approach

Founded upon the inspirational Native American principle, "In every deliberation, we must consider the impact on the seventh generation," SGA drives strategies that safeguard our planet, its inhabitants and future generations. SGA was built on the notion that economic development, environmental effectiveness and social responsibility are complementary elements of a sustainable society. Operating from the principles that "people support what they help to create" and "what gets measured gets done," SGA enrolls business, community and government leaders in collaborative efforts that achieve sustainability goals and incorporate strong metrics that lead to results.



A Catalyst for Local, Sustainable Communities



Trends and Metrics Quick Glance

The Quick Glance below provides an assessment of our communities' progress in achieving goals within the Environmental Sustainability Plan for Oak Park and River Forest.



Seven Generations Ahead (SGA) works with communities and regions to catalyze and support local sustainability plan development and implementation. These plans help communities reduce their impact on climate change, improve community health, and conserve and enhance existing natural resources. SGA's capabilities include:

- Developing and implementing comprehensive sustainability plans
- Linking communities to funding, programs, technical experts and resources
- Building networks and coalitions to drive sustainability change
- Measuring results through success indicators and report cards

For Example

Developing and Implementing Community Sustainability Plans: PlanItGreen



Goals, Strategies, Metrics and Report Cards

SGA has played the role of catalyst, facilitator and content expert in advocating for the design and implementation of PlanItGreen, a two-community sustainability plan, implementation and report card initiative in Oak Park, IL and River Forest, IL. A project of the Oak Park River Forest Community Foundation, PlanItGreen is entering its 6th year of implementation in 2017 and is recognized as a top community sustainability model in the Chicago area, and has led to other SGA and partner sustainability plan initiatives in Highland Park, IL; Toledo, OH; Lucas County, OH; and Northbrook, IL.

Creating Models: The Sustainability Plan Toolkit

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC)



SGA partnered with CMAP and the MMC to develop CMAP's *Sustainability Plan Toolkit*, designed to guide local communities on process, strategies and indicators related to sustainability planning.

Creating Healthy Community Action Plans: Healthy West Chicago

West Chicago, IL



SGA designed and led the planning process that engaged the community at-large and institutional stakeholders in creating the Healthy West Chicago Community Action Plan in 2015. Guided by Mayor Ruben Pineda and multiple community institution partners, the project completed its 1st year of implementation in 2016 – designed to combat obesity by improving access to nutritious foods and increasing physical activity among the city's 27,000 majority Latino population.

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Building Statewide and Regional Networks



Not all local communities have the capacity to create their own sustainability plans, and not all issues are local. Regional networks bring together multiple communities to collaborate on regional/local projects that advance common goals. Some issues require statewide focus and coalition development to address gap needs in sustainability. SGA's capabilities include:

- Creating effective statewide coalitions focusing on single issue topics
- Developing regional sustainability networks that bring public, private and community sector institutions together to learn, plan and act together across multiple sustainability topic areas
- Producing summits, stakeholder forums, reports and models that drive change

For Example



The Illinois Food Scrap Coalition (IFSC)

Reducing Waste and Building a Robust Composting Industry

The IFSC is a group of 160 businesses, government agencies and non-profits organized to advance food scrap composting across Illinois. Initiated by Seven Generations Ahead and partners, the IFSC supports research, programs, education and policies. SGA facilitated the IFSC strategic plan, authored the Food Scrap Composting Challenges and Solutions in Illinois Report (2015), and facilitates stakeholder forums, legislator sessions, and food scraps systems support with hospitals, universities, schools and businesses.

The Fox Valley Sustainability Network (FVSN)



Communities Creating a Sustainable Fox River Valley

The Fox Valley Sustainability Network – launched in January 2016 - is a project of Seven Generations Ahead in partnership with the City of Aurora, Kane County, a5 Branding and Digital and Fox Valley communities. The FVSN provides best practices, resources, programs and case studies; creates collaboration through forums and project teams; and drives new “big idea” projects that lead to sustainability outcomes across the Fox River Valley.

The Illinois Farm to School Network (IFSN)



Local Food, Gardens and Healthy Eating Education in Schools

SGA founded and facilitates the IFSN, which provides web-based materials and e-newsletters, connects schools to resources, produces an annual Illinois Farm to School Summit, and facilitates local food procurement, food service and teacher training and classroom education programs. SGA was selected by the National Farm to School Program to be its lead agency for the state of Illinois.

Making the Farm to School Connection



Children who learn to understand the source and nature of their food are the foundation for a healthier tomorrow. This quiet but powerful concept is at the core of Fresh from the Farm (FFF), an educational program of Seven Generations Ahead and provides the foundation for SGA's role as the National Farm to School Program's lead agency for the state of Illinois. SGA's farm to school mission is to grow a culture of healthy eating and environmental awareness among children, and connect children directly to local, healthy and sustainably-raised food. SGA's capabilities include:

- Training educators on SGA's healthy eating/local foods curricula and programming
- Training food service personnel on local food procurement, menu design and messaging
- Facilitating school gardens that connect to classroom learning
- Providing resources, consulting, forums and programs through the Illinois Farm to School Network.

For Example

Bringing Farm to School Curricula, Gardens and Programming to Communities

Chicago, Aurora, Kane County, Cook County and Across Illinois



Through USDA Farm to School and foundation grants, SGA trains educators to use its healthy eating curriculum modules (Roots & Fruits for young children, Sow & Grow for elementary-aged kids, and Linking Plants and Food for middle schoolers) in schools, catalyzes school garden development and farm excursions, and provides consulting and support on local food procurement.

The Great Illinois Apple Crunch

Connecting Children and Food Services to Local Apples Toward Growing Healthy Eating Habits



The Great Illinois Crunch raises awareness about healthy eating and local foods by serving school children apples from local growers and frontloading educational activities and curriculum lessons leading up to the "Crunch". On a day in October each year, thousands of children across Illinois crunch into apples that the program helps food service directors source from orchards in Illinois and Michigan.

Illinois Harvest of the Month

Procurement Focus on a Different Local Fruit or Vegetable Each Month



The Illinois Harvest of the Month (IHOM) program provides tools to procure, process and incorporate one fresh fruit or vegetable each month into school and daycare food programs. Complemented by education in the classroom, IHOM increases children's access to healthy, local foods; supports small and large-scale produce procurement; and supports scratch cooking and new menu development.

Moving Toward Zero Waste



Seven Generations Ahead promotes planning and implementation that moves communities toward generating zero waste. SGA works with schools, municipalities, businesses and community organizations to provide training and support for all steps along the zero waste path, from conducting waste assessments to acquiring funding to guiding strategy implementation. SGA's capabilities include:

- Driving residential, commercial and institutional food scrap composting programs and systems implementation
- Designing zero waste plans and facilitating zero waste event training and implementation
- Implementing SGA's comprehensive *Zero Waste Ambassadors* program within schools

For Example

Bringing the Goal of Zero Waste to Schools

Zero Waste Ambassadors

SGA's Zero Waste Ambassadors program engages students in learning and action to divert more than 80 percent of their school's waste from landfills. The program incorporates SGA's Don't Throw Me Away classroom curriculum to complement operational changes. SGA has driven implementation of full-district programs in Oak Park and River Forest, IL; a 20-school Chicago Public Schools pilot; and implementation in Highland Park, Naperville, Kenilworth and communities across IL.

Food Scrap Collection, Hauling and Composting

Businesses, Institutions and Community Events

Hospitals, universities, schools, restaurants, businesses, large scale festivals and events produce organic waste that can be converted to high quality compost through commercial food scrap diversion. SGA conducts waste audits, reviews hauler contracts, educates staff, and supports food scrap composting systems, programs and zero waste festivals and events.

Reports, Policies, and Economic Assessment

Food Scrap Composting Barriers and Solutions in Illinois

SGA conducted statewide stakeholder forums and authored the Food Scrap Composting Challenges and Solutions in Illinois Report (2015) - sharing best practices, policies and programs across the country, and addressing barriers and opportunities in IL. SGA commissioned an economic assessment report (2017) on potential jobs and state tax revenue that a viable composting industry would create. SGA collaborates with IFSC partners to educate legislators and stakeholders on the benefits of food scrap composting and priority strategies and policies.

Conferences and Forums



Seven Generations Ahead in collaboration with partners organizes conferences, learning events, planning forums and trainings that convene leaders and practitioners. These events highlight best practices and model initiatives from the Midwest region, across the country and around the globe. Offering appropriate tools and materials, SGA learning forums build toward and support broader sustainable and healthy community planning initiatives. SGA's capabilities include:

- Convening public, private and community sector networks
- Designing conferences, workshops, half-day forums, mayors breakfasts and other events
- Driving sustainability planning and implementation through major conferences

Work Samples

GreenTown: The Future of Community
Illinois, Ohio, Indiana and Michigan



In 2007, Seven Generations Ahead and partner a5 Branding & Digital founded GreenTown to bring public and private sector leaders together to learn, network and take action on sustainable and healthy community strategies. Through 2016, we have worked with local mayors, universities, businesses and planning partners to produce 19 events in IL, MI, IN and OH. Keynotes have included William McDonough, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley in addition to other national, regional and local speakers.



Fox Valley Sustainability Network and Sustainable Community Forums

Bikable & Walkable Communities, Economic Development, Renewable Energy and More

Through the FVSN, SGA conducts half-day forums 6 times annually featuring local/regional speakers and practitioners covering Food, Waste, Energy, Transportation, Economic Development, Water and Green Infrastructure. SGA organizes Lunch & Learns, Walk Audits, and other workshop formats to promote strategies linked to its multiple sustainability planning and network initiatives.

Training the Trainers to Expand Our Reach

Building Local School Capacity

SGA offers teacher training on four curriculum modules targeting elementary and middle school students. Roots & Fruits (ages 2-5), Sow & Grow (grades K-5) and Linking Plants and Food (grades 6-8) teach children about healthy eating, gardening and local food systems. Don't Throw Me Away!: A Zero Waste Curriculum teaches children about recycling, waste elimination and composting.



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