

S Seven Generations Ahead

Promoting Healthy & Sustainable 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.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Energy	Transportation	Climate	Community Development	Water	Food
Energy usage decreased 10%	By the year 2020, 100% of city vehicles will be electric	Energy usage decreased 10%	Transportation mode shifted 10%	Water use decreased 10%	The City of 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

Key Initiatives

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 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.



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

Key Initiatives



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 our 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 Wasted Food Solutions Task Force (WFSTF)

Building Food Recovery and Food Scrap Composting Collaboration

The WFSTF – a working group developed by Fresh Taste, Seven Generations Ahead, The Greater Chicago Food Depository and the Illinois Food Scrap Coalition – provides learning and working group forums to drive project development and implementation that supports food recovery for people in need and food scrap composting.



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Making the Farm to School Connection



Farm to school is a people-powered movement that seeks to strengthen the connection children and communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers. There are three main components of farm to school: sourcing local food for child nutrition programs, hands-on gardening, and food and nutrition education.

SGA runs the Illinois Farm to School Network, which connects practitioners, provides training and resources, and advocates for farm to school activities across the state.

SGA's capabilities include:

- Developing new resources and online trainings through www.illinoisfarmtoschool.org
- Conducting in-person food service and teacher trainings on topics like local food purchasing, seasonal menu development, and garden-based education
- Coordinating key local food promotion programs to encourage and support more educational institutions to purchase food from local producers

Key Initiatives

Illinois Harvest of the Month

A Seasonal Celebration of Local Fruits & Veggies

Illinois Harvest of the Month (IHOM) helps school districts, feeding sites, and early care centers source and celebrate seasonal, local food. Each month, registered participants highlight a different local item on their cafeteria menus or in their school gardens. IHOM brings more money to local farmers, healthier food to the cafeteria, and educational opportunities for students about healthy eating.



The Illinois Great Apple Crunch

A day-long local food celebration!

Part of the Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch, the Illinois Great Apple Crunch is an annual celebration of fresh, local apples on the second Thursday of October. Schools, early child care facilities, and other child education programs across Illinois can participate by serving local apples on the lunch tray or in the classroom, and 'crunch'-ing into them together all at the same time. Illinois Farm to School Network helps participants find local orchards and provides promotional tools and educational supplements that teach students all about Illinois apples.



Fresh From the Farm

Garden-Based Nutrition Education

Aligned to the Common Core and Illinois State Learning Standards, SGA's Fresh From the Farm curricula (Sow & Grow, Roots & Fruits, and Linking Plants and Food) are designed to engage children from 1st through 8th grades. SGA provides lessons free of charge to educators and delivers teacher trainings on their implementation.



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

Key Initiatives

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% 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 Illinois.

Food Scrap Collection, Hauling and Composting

Businesses, Institutions and Community Events

Hospitals, universities, schools, restaurants, businesses, large scale festivals & 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 & 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 Illinois. SGA commissioned an economic assessment report (2017) on potential jobs and state tax revenue that a viable composting industry would create and a "Composting in Agriculture" paper highlighting barriers and recommendations for increasing the use of compost in farming. 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

Key Initiatives

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. We have worked with local mayors, universities, businesses and planning partners to produce more than 20 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 experts.

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.

Advancing Solar in Illinois



With the passing and implementation of the Future Energy Jobs Act in Illinois, our state is poised to double its solar production and meet newly established renewable portfolio standard goal targets. But meeting these targets will require educating institutional and residential consumers and providing options that guide them toward action. SGA is playing a leading role in educating institutional leaders across the Chicago metro area about options for procuring solar energy and installing solar arrays, making connections to solar developers and new projects, and supporting behind-the-scenes readiness to move institutions and communities toward 100% renewable electricity procurement.

- Connecting community institutions and businesses to Community Solar energy purchasing
- Supporting on-site solar installations in local communities
- Connecting solar to low-to-moderate income residents and institutions
- Educating youth as the next generation renewable energy leaders

Key Initiatives

Conducting Regional Forums

SGA produces forums as part of its work with the Fox Valley Sustainability Network, GreenTown and other projects that bring together solar energy experts, developers and institutional customers to connect and learn next steps for procuring solar energy and developing rooftop installations. SGA will conduct forums across the Chicago metro area that advance solar procurement goals.

PlanItGreen

As part of facilitating the implementation of the Environmental Sustainability Plan for Oak Park and River Forest, SGA conducts forums, educates institutional leaders, vets and links solar developers, develops solar project RFPs, and acquires funding to support solar energy purchasing and installations. PlanItGreen's selection as part of the National Renewable Energy Laboratory's Solar Energy Innovation Network is supporting planning to get to 100% renewable electricity.

Solar in Your Community

SGA as part of PlanItGreen convened a project team that was selected as one of 171 communities across the country to compete for a Solar in Your Community award. Project scope included exploring municipal "community choice" aggregation for residential solar energy purchasing; institutional purchases through Community Solar agreements, funding acquisition of \$100,000 to support the Park District of Oak Park's solar installation and other green features at its Conservatory; and the Park District of Oak Park's community-leading installations of solar arrays on its facilities.

Local, Sustainable Ag, Water Quality & Soil Health



Protecting Illinois' natural resources and growing our local economy go hand in hand. SGA and our partners understand the importance of breaking out of silos and forging partnerships that generate collaboration toward the mutual goals of building a sustainable food shed for local consumption in Illinois; protecting our water quality from excessive nitrates and phosphorous; and building Illinois' soil health for long-term sustainable agriculture production. To these ends, SGA works with partners across the state in these capacities:

- Developing networks and working groups to address natural resource protection issues
- Supporting state policy initiatives that protect our water, soil and air quality
- Convening disparate organizations to learn, network and find common ground solutions
- Providing strategic planning guidance to support cross-boundary projects and initiatives

Key Initiatives

Fox River Water Quality Protection Green Infrastructure Education and Strategic Planning in the Fox Valley

SGA works with the Fox River Ecosystem Partnership to create learning forums in the Fox Valley around water quality protection and green infrastructure, and through its Fox Valley Sustainability Network works with these organizations to seek funding for projects. SGA's facilitation of the strategic planning process for a new Fox River Coalition has brought together organizations in IL and WI to look at Fox River water quality gap areas that need addressing.

Soil Health

Through the Illinois Environmental Council, SGA collaborates with multiple organizations to work on priority strategies and policy considerations that will improve Illinois' long-term soil health. Through its GreenTown events and its Illinois Soil, Food, Water and Composting Summit, SGA brings together groups working on different but related issues to learn and explore points of collaboration and support.

Local, Sustainable Food

Through project collaborations with Kane County and other partners across the Chicago metro area, SGA is collaborating to advance development of sub-regional pockets of increased local food production and institutional local food procurement. SGA continues to push for statewide collaboration that will look at a long-term strategy for increasing the sustainability of all levels of agriculture in Illinois while also increasing the sustainable production of food for local consumption in Illinois.



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