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# CharMeck Community Sustainability Plan Feasibility Study

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the years, the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County (“CharMeck”) have developed a number of plans, policies, and governing documents that support a sustainable community. While these documents are filled with insightful information, there has not yet been an effort to consolidate this material, bring together interested parties, and develop a unified vision that supports a sustainable CharMeck.

As the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County began to explore the idea of working together to achieve these goals, it was determined by staff that a feasibility study was needed. This study has been prepared over the course of two months and serves to provide a clear directive on whether a community sustainability plan (CSP) is feasible by answering the questions, *Why should or shouldn't CharMeck consider developing a CSP? Based on research and stakeholder feedback, which solutions for moving forward make the most sense? What is to be gained or lost by moving forward? What resources (time, money, effort) will be required?*

Local governments continue to explore the issue of developing CSPs because of the potential benefits that can result, like better cross-jurisdictional and cross-departmental coordination and collaboration, enhanced communication with policymakers and stakeholders regarding sustainability priorities, improved positioning for grant funding, awards, and recognition, cost-savings from the implementation of initiatives developed in the CSP, and many others.

Six scenarios for moving forward are presented by ICMA and are summarized beginning on page 3 of this Executive Summary, and described in greater detail in Section 4 of this study. It should be noted that for each of the scenarios presented, a triple-bottom-line approach is recommended, or one that incorporates the environment, economy, and social equity aspects equally. This approach is supported by thought-leaders in the sustainability field, and was confirmed as the preferable focus of a sustainability planning effort through stakeholder interviews and meetings.

ICMA has made the recommendation to move forward with a melding of two scenarios as the most feasible solution. This solution entails developing a common vision and a high-level framework that provides the foundation and context for building upon the Quality of Life (QOL) Study. ICMA made this recommendation based on research and stakeholder feedback. Stakeholders interviewed by ICMA felt strongly that the City and County at least do *something* to provide an opportunity to collaborate, and join together jurisdictions and community stakeholders.

To inform the feasibility study, the following information sources were used: ICMA survey data; analysis of sustainability plans, processes and programs from around the United States; meetings with CharMeck region local government staff and local non-profits; interviews of 18 CharMeck community leaders; as well as detailed case studies of 14 communities. Please see the Appendix for full case studies (Appendix A), summaries of local stakeholder interviews (Appendix B), stakeholder meeting notes (Appendix C), and additional resources consulted (Appendix D). A review of City, County, and regional CharMeck documents was also conducted.

All of these resources inform the “Findings” that are inserted at the beginning of each relevant section of this document, the Scenarios in Section 4.0, and the Recommendations in Section 5.0. The findings are brief summarizations of information that stood out during research or stakeholder interviews and meetings. Scenarios in Section 4.0 were developed as potential paths forward for CharMeck, and include a number of distinct options and features. The scenarios range from business-as-usual to the development of a full-scale CSP, and also include the many shades of gray in between. Recommendations in Section 5.0 include ICMA’s recommended scenario, and general suggestions based on what was learned.

## Prominent Findings

Of the many findings sprinkled throughout this study, there were a few that stood out because they were mentioned by multiple stakeholders, have particular relevance to CharMeck, or were especially insightful. Following are a sampling of the more prominent findings:

- **Terminology Matters.** “Quality of life” is a phrase that is understood and supported among CharMeck residents, whereas the word “sustainability” can be divisive and perceived as a concept that places individual property rights at risk. As an alternative to the word sustainability, some communities have used phrases such as livability (“Denver Livability Partnership”)<sup>1</sup>, tomorrow (“The Tomorrow Plan”)<sup>2</sup> or pointed to a specific year (“Central City 2035”)<sup>3</sup>. Other jurisdictions have redefined sustainability. San Antonio’s Mission Verde Sustainability Plan focused largely on the ability to compete successfully in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century global economy.<sup>4</sup>
- **Knit Together Existing Resources.** The City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the CharMeck region have many existing efforts that address sustainability, including but not limited to a regional HUD planning grant (“Connect Project”); Quality of Life Study; Envision Charlotte plan; comprehensive plans of the towns in Mecklenburg County; Mecklenburg County’s Environmental Sustainability Plan, and Blueprint for a Healthier Generation, 2020; and the City of Charlotte’s Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework and Sustainable City Facilities Plan. A frequent comment heard during ICMA’s information-gathering processes was that a CSP could help “knit together” existing activities.
- **Engagement beyond Public Hearings.** Community engagement is an important part of developing a CSP. By inviting the community to have a seat at the table, CharMeck local governments can hear from stakeholders about common areas of interest and goals. By participating in the engagement process, stakeholders will have greater buy-in and understanding of the project. CharMeck stakeholders have successfully used community engagement tactics such as small group discussions, meetings with established civic groups, automated calls, traditional mail surveys, and online outreach like the development of project websites, the use of two-way communication tools, and surveys.
- **Goal Setting and Performance Measurement Matters.** ICMA research suggests that the adoption of a specific sustainability resolution or other policy action with specific goals and targets can lead to expanded actions by the jurisdiction. A CharMeck CSP would benefit from the existing quantitative measures and approaches undertaken by the Quality of Life data, because a potential performance measurement system is already in place in the community.

The findings were then used to help develop the scenarios and recommendations.

## Summarized Scenarios

Scenarios were developed as a means to take the information learned from research and stakeholder feedback (as described in the findings), and use it to answer the question, “knowing what ICMA knows (about sustainability plans generally and CharMeck specifically), what are the most promising options for a path forward?” These scenarios are summarized below:

**Scenario 1: Business as Usual.** Continue on the current course and proceed with business as usual.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.denvergov.org/TOD/TODStrategicImplementation/tabid/438465/Default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thetomorrowplan.com>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/47907>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.sanantonio.gov/oep/SustainabilityPlan/Summaries/Introduction.pdf>

**Scenario 2: Meeting of the Minds.** Continue the conversation between the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the towns in Mecklenburg County to discover a common vision and areas of interest where collaboration and coordination may benefit all parties.

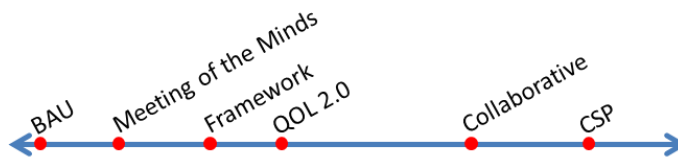
**Scenario 3: Framework.** Agree to a common set of guiding principles that each community is working towards, without proscribing how to get there. Common elements of existing vision and mission statements could present a starting point for the discussion.

**Scenario 4: Quality of Life 2.0.** Use the Quality of Life (QOL) Study to build a more integrated sustainability strategy for the CharMeck region. Many of the indicators addressed in the QOL Study have sustainability implications, as the concepts of sustainability and quality of life have significant overlap. Develop goals for specific indicators, and a plan for reaching those goals.

**Scenario 5: CharMeck Collaborative.** Promote cross-jurisdictional and public-private partnerships in support of regional action planning on sustainability and climate change. Establish a formal yet flexible Collaborative that defines expectations, and removes ambiguity as to how the partnership should function.

**Scenario 6: Community Sustainability Plan.** Develop a CSP using material from existing documents, and glean additional information from stakeholders. Each chapter of the plan focuses on a particular topic, and could include background information on progress that has already been made, and current programs. Also included would be goals attached to metrics (i.e. reduce energy used in commercial buildings 15% by 2025), and implementation steps detailing how the goal will be met.

Each of the scenarios is meant to build from the previous scenario, and should be thought as a continuum with interchangeable features:



### *Prominent Recommendations*

In addition to the scenarios, a set of recommendations is included in Section 5.0. In this section, ICMA recommends moving forward with Scenario 3 (Framework) as a baseline for developing a common vision that would then provide the context for building upon the QOL Study, as described in Scenario 4 (Quality of Life 2.0). ICMA selected the hybrid Scenario 3 and Scenario 4 model based on research and stakeholder feedback. There is great interest in seeing the local governments move forward with an effort that allows for greater coordination and collaboration. Stakeholders also expressed concern over developing an effort that is redundant or not achievable. Based on ICMA’s research, using the QOL Study is the best means to reach the desired end.

General recommendations were also developed based on research and stakeholder interviews, and the scenarios provided the proper context. The recommendations can be applied to any of the scenarios, and a sampling of the most prominent recommendations is included below.

- ***Framing the Issue and the Path Forward.*** The word “sustainability” has become somewhat of a lightning rod and it may be that the CharMeck effort should be branded differently and in a way that

resonates with as many stakeholder constituencies as possible. Themes, branding, taglines and terms should be carefully considered when moving forward. Additionally, it should be clear that sustainability is perceived differently and in most places is interpreted at the local level. A path forward that allows some communities and jurisdictions to focus on larger sets of issues while others may only opt for a smaller subset would seemingly provide a viable approach for a CSP. Sustainability planning need not change the individual character of the communities in Mecklenburg County.

- ***Develop a Mechanism for Working Together.*** Use this opportunity to convene stakeholders in a cross-jurisdictional and multi-stakeholder process. Hold a meeting of the minds with, at a minimum, staff from the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the towns in Mecklenburg County. This will afford an opportunity for jurisdictions to begin discussing priorities, goals, and opportunities for collaboration, now and in the future. At the onset of the project, there should be a process whereby the jurisdictions in Mecklenburg County can opt in or out of participation.
- ***Single Point of Entry.*** When getting started, CharMeck needs to establish a single point of contact that is easily identified and can clearly communicate the stages and phases, successes and challenges of developing a CharMeck CSP. Similarly, an advisory committee or board of directors that can provide strategic direction might also be warranted at the outset of a planning process.
- ***Keep it Manageable and Achievable.*** Determine what can reasonably be accomplished with available resources and move forward accordingly. As expressed during stakeholder interviews, the community is more interested in seeing the jurisdictions in Mecklenburg County successfully move forward with a small-scale effort rather than creating an effort so comprehensive that it's too cumbersome to manage and too challenging to implement.
- ***Two Key Partners.*** The Metropolitan Studies Group at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte and the Foundation for the Carolinas should be considered as priority partners in each of the scenarios. The Metropolitan Studies Group is already familiar with the indicators that are relevant to sustainability and with CharMeck local government staff. The Foundation for the Carolinas has successfully engaged the community on a broad range of issues, compensated through a variety of funding arrangements.

## *Going Forward*

There are many ways to approach the issue of sustainability planning in a large metropolitan area that, to its credit, has done much of the legwork and data collection that would be included in a community sustainability plan (CSP), or any other large-scale effort. In many ways this is a double-edged sword. Because CharMeck is neither at the beginning of the sustainability planning process nor the end, the challenge is in deciding where to jump in the middle, with whom, and in what direction. To a great extent, the CharMeck community is embarking on reverse engineering. The Quality of Life study has provided much of the data that would be measured in a CSP, but the missing piece is an actionable strategy to get from point A to point B. No matter which course of action is chosen, based on research and stakeholder feedback, a coordinated sustainability effort is a viable project, and what is most important is that the communities in Mecklenburg County do *something* that encourages collaboration and coordination in one easily identifiable place, be it a person, a document, or a committee.

# **PART A – DISCOVERIES & CONCLUSIONS**

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Part A of the feasibility study is divided into sections that present the introduction and purpose of this study, as well as a brief description of the methodology used during its development, and the discoveries and conclusions that resulted through research and analysis. For more detailed information on the methodology, please see Part B, which begins on page 23.

## **SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE**

The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, North Carolina obtained services from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) to review elements of a community sustainability plan (CSP) and conduct a feasibility study. Both the City and the County have existing plans, policies, and governing documents that address the topic of sustainability, and through their individual efforts, recognized the potential efficiencies that could be gained through a joint CSP. The objective of this study is to determine the CharMeck community's level of interest and support in creating an interjurisdictional CSP, and potential paths for moving forward.

The terms sustainability and CSP will be used throughout the feasibility study, but are representative of a diverse number of names and naming conventions that communities use.

## **SECTION 2.0 METHODOLOGY**

To meet the objectives of this study, ICMA used a variety of information sources to examine factors unique to the CharMeck area. The resources used in the feasibility study include: ICMA Survey Data; analysis of multiple sustainability plans, processes and programs from around the United States; meetings with CharMeck region local government staff and local non-profit representatives; interviews of 18 CharMeck community leaders; as well as detailed profiles of 14 communities selected for benchmarking. Please see the Appendix for more in-depth information, including full case studies (Appendix A), summaries of local stakeholder interviews (Appendix B), stakeholder meeting notes (Appendix C), and additional resources consulted (Appendix D). While ICMA attempted to reach a broad and relevant group of stakeholders, this study was conducted during a timeframe of two months, and the stakeholder engagement process was restricted as such.

All of these resources were used to inform the "Findings" inserted at the beginning of each relevant section in this document, the Scenarios in Section 4.0, and the Recommendations in Section 5.0. The findings are brief summarizations of information that stood out during research or stakeholder interviews and meetings. Scenarios in Section 4.0 were developed as potential paths forward for CharMeck, and include a number of varying options and features. The scenarios range from business-as-usual to the development of a full-scale CSP, and include many shades of gray in between. Recommendations in Section 5.0 include ICMA's recommended scenario, and general suggestions based on what was learned.

### *2.1 ICMA Survey on Local Government Sustainability Policies and Programs*

ICMA's 2010 survey on Local Government Sustainability Policies and Programs was sent to 8,569 local governments with a population of more than 2,500 residents. The response rate was 25.4% with 2,176 local governments responding. The survey results mirrored findings evident in similar surveys distributed by the National Association of Counties (NACO) and the National League of Cities (NLC) that were also distributed during the same time frame. ICMA's survey covered a variety of topic areas including:



- Policy priorities for issues such as the environment, economy, social justice, climate change, green jobs, energy, housing and public transportation as well as the strategies that governments used to operationalize sustainability, such as the adoption of resolutions and plans with specific performance measures, the establishment of a sustainability plan or policy, the appointment of a citizens commission, or the dedication of resources including budget or staff.
- Specific policies and programs implemented by local governments such as water conservation and storm water management; recycling and solid waste management; energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy; transportation improvements and innovations; building construction, retrofitting and land use; social inclusion and environmental justice; as well as a variety of other topics.

## *2.2 Interviews with CharMeck region Local Government and Community Stakeholders*

ICMA conducted interviews of local stakeholders, which allowed for “high touch” opportunities with more than two dozen individuals from local governments and organizations representing nonprofit, business and academic stakeholders. The interviews used a common set of questions to solicit information and were conducted by ICMA staff that have completed feasibility studies or worked in local governments.

ICMA also hosted meetings with key stakeholders, the first of which was a half-day SWOT analysis and small group discussion with Charlotte and Mecklenburg County staff. Additional meetings were held with representatives from local nonprofit organizations and the towns in Mecklenburg County. Meeting notes and a list of key stakeholders that contributed to this report as interviewees or meeting attendees is included in Appendix B.

## *2.3 Case Studies*

Fourteen local governments were selected for benchmarking analysis, and characteristics such as population size, geographic location, operating budget, staff size, access to relevant data, and the presence of regional partnerships were used in the selection of these communities. The communities include Asheville, NC; Arlington County, VA; Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; DeKalb County, GA; Dubuque, IA; Durham, NC; Nashville-Davidson, TN; Palo Alto, CA; Raleigh, NC; San Antonio, TX; Sarasota County, FL; Memphis-Shelby, TN; and Onondaga County, NY.

Information was also collected from public documents like budgets and community sustainability plans. Additionally, interviews were conducted with key individuals involved in current initiatives, such as the Sustainability Officer or individuals who were involved in development of plans through commissions or task forces. While all 14 communities had sustainability initiatives in place, with some degree of variability in their definition, eight had or were engaging in the process of creating a community sustainability plan. Complete case studies can be found in Appendix A.

## *2.4 Document Review and Analysis*

Throughout the process of developing this feasibility study, ICMA reviewed many sustainability planning processes beyond the community case studies discussed in Appendix A. Documents specific to CharMeck were also reviewed. A complete list of resources is included in Appendix D. Additionally, where appropriate, specific sources are cited as footnotes throughout the main text of this feasibility study.

## 2.5 Identifying External Consultants

As part of this project, ICMA identified consulting firms that have worked with communities on sustainability planning and other similar efforts. The list of potential consultants is included in Appendix E. In many of the communities profiled in the case studies, it should be noted that the strategy or plan was developed by internal staff with support from external parties, which ranged from local facilitators to larger planning and engineering firms.

## SECTION 3.0 DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability can be defined from an academic perspective, by using common definitions from the field of sustainability, and in such a way that it makes sense at a local level, taking into account what's important to a particular community. In some communities, a CSP that excludes bike lanes would be insufficient; in other communities still, access to local food or energy may be the most relevant topics. Different definitions of sustainability as well as key findings learned through interviews, meetings, and research are outlined below.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Understanding the Problem You Are Trying to Solve.** It is important to understand the focus and scope of an effort by identifying the most pertinent issues and needs. A shared education process may lead to greater understanding of the sustainability concept and reduce the potential for misunderstanding and politicization.

**Terminology Matters.** “Quality of life” is a phrase that is understood and supported among CharMeck residents, whereas the word “sustainability” can be divisive and perceived as a concept that places individual property rights at risk. As an alternative to the word sustainability, some communities have used phrases such as livability (“Denver Livability Partnership”)<sup>5</sup>, tomorrow (“The Tomorrow Plan”)<sup>6</sup> or pointed to a specific year (“Central City 2035”)<sup>7</sup>. Other jurisdictions have redefined sustainability. San Antonio’s Mission Verde Sustainability Plan focused largely on the ability to compete successfully in a 21<sup>st</sup> Century global economy.<sup>8</sup>

**Priorities Differ.** Mecklenburg County includes the major urban center of Charlotte and several small towns, each with different visions for what makes a community great for residents and businesses. Sustainability is not a one-size-fits-all mantra, and to develop a regional CSP unique to CharMeck, the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the small towns will need to come together based on common interests and goals.

**Sustainability = Triple Bottom Line.** When CharMeck stakeholders and local government staff were asked to define sustainability, the most common responses included variations of the triple bottom line, with no greater emphasis on any one aspect of environmental, economic, or social equity than any other. The economic aspect was mentioned repeatedly based on the importance of maintaining a robust local and regional economy, and keeping existing residents and businesses while attracting newcomers. Sustainability in CharMeck may also be framed within the context of making the community better for residents, their children, and their grandchildren.

**Politicization of Sustainability.** In many communities throughout the country, there is a counter-representation of sustainability by connecting it with the loss of individual property rights. Many otherwise beneficial sustainability projects have been sidetracked due to this small but vocal minority. The CharMeck region, like any other community, could be negatively impacted by this tactic.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.denvergov.org/TOD/TODStrategicImplementation/tabid/438465/Default.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.thetomorrowplan.com>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/47907>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.sanantonio.gov/oep/SustainabilityPlan/Summaries/Introduction.pdf>

The conceptual keystone of sustainable development was put in place with the publication of “Our Common Future” or what is commonly known as the Brundtland Report<sup>9</sup>, which was penned by Gro Harlem Brundtland, chairwoman of the World Commission on Environment and Development, convened by the United Nations in the early 1980s. While the report spanned a range of environmental, social, and developmental topics, the lasting legacy is the simple definition of sustainability which continues to this day. With the Brundtland Report, a new frame of reference emerged and over the last twenty years the triple bottom line has been adopted by academic fields of inquiry and professional fields of practice, including local government management. When asked to define sustainability, CharMeck stakeholders largely defined sustainability using the triple bottom line, in both interview settings (see Appendix B) and meetings (see Appendix C).

Moreover, in recent years sustainability has become a politicized term, largely at the local level where much of the sustainable communities work is taking place. A vocal minority has expressed the belief that strategies for creating more sustainable communities are merely a cover for reducing individual and property rights and an attempt to take away local control. The basis for these arguments is a document created by the United Nations and the global community—Agenda 21—which is nothing more than a flexible statement of principles. As stated in a recent ICMA publication:

*Some of today’s critics present sustainability as a dangerous philosophy that promotes a not-too-distant future in which freedom, liberty, and the timeless aspirations of leaving a better life for our kids are trampled by a new world order outlined in a United Nations document known as Agenda 21. Yet others suggest that sustainability is the green pathway to our harmoniously converged future, where the lion lies down with the lamb. . . Neither extreme seems to frame the issue of sustainability accurately.<sup>10</sup>*

Simply put, sustainability is the ability of communities to consistently thrive over time as they make decisions to improve their community today without sacrificing the future. And what is clear is that there is no single approach that is right for every community. Some communities may feel that addressing global warming through climate action planning or climate adaptation strategies is the level at which they pursue sustainability actions. Others may feel that economic resiliency is the overarching rubric that is the best fit for their community. Some have put in place highly complex plans that cover much of what a local government does, while other small jurisdictions may focus on very specific areas, such as good jobs that pay family wages. To be usable in settings of different scope and size, the definition of sustainability needs context and should be flexible across jurisdictions.

## SECTION 4.0 SCENARIOS FOR MOVING FORWARD

The scenarios presented below are meant to provide the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County with proposed options for moving forward. Each scenario was developed based on: case studies, which provided an important sense of perspective and a means by which to compare CharMeck with other regions; meetings and interviews of local stakeholders and government staff, which allowed the authors of this study to learn about the issues unique to CharMeck; a review of existing CharMeck programs and documents; and research based on ICMA surveys and other data. Please see the Appendix for more in-depth information, including full case studies (Appendix A), summaries of local stakeholder interviews (Appendix B), stakeholder meeting notes (Appendix C), and additional resources consulted (Appendix D).

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<sup>9</sup> [http://conspect.nl/pdf/Our\\_Common\\_Future-Brundtland\\_Report\\_1987.pdf](http://conspect.nl/pdf/Our_Common_Future-Brundtland_Report_1987.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Tad McGalliard, 2012. “Reframing the Sustainability Conversation from What to How.” *PM Magazine*. ICMA. Washington, DC.

While each scenario has specific recommended actions, the actions should be thought of as items on a menu that are interchangeable among the scenarios. Staffing plans and start-up costs for each scenario are meant to provide a rough estimate of Year 1 costs and should not be considered precise. There will likely be additional costs after Year 1 that are not included. As CharMeck moves forward with a scenario or combination of scenarios, it is likely that the scope of work, and thus the cost and level of effort, would be further refined. The cost estimate provided for each scenario includes estimates for CharMeck local government employees using baseline hourly rates and an assumed level of effort (LOE) as well as other direct costs such as meeting expenses, website development, external consultants and a potential contingency line-item for cost over-runs or change orders. We assumed sizeable participation from all CharMeck jurisdictions for most of the scenarios.

It should be noted that for each of the scenarios presented, a triple-bottom-line approach is recommended, or one that incorporates the environment, economy, and social equity aspects equally. This approach is supported by thought-leaders in the sustainability field, and was confirmed as the preferable focus of a sustainability planning effort through stakeholder interviews and meetings.

#### *4.1 Scenario 1: Business as Usual*

Based on stakeholder feedback shared at meetings and in interviews, the preferred scenario is to at least do *something* to provide an opportunity to collaborate, and join together jurisdictions and community stakeholders. That said, the option always exists to **continue on the current course and proceed with business as usual**. For this option, the City, County, towns, and community stakeholders will continue to operate independently. While there are no upfront costs for this option, there are likely opportunity costs associated with missed opportunities to work together. These costs could be in the form of lost time or money due to inefficiencies, or lost revenue from missed chances to collaborate on funding opportunities. There is also a missed opportunity for the jurisdictions in Mecklenburg County to lead by example. Lastly, community stakeholders are looking to the local governments to take action, and pursue a path that allows for greater coordination and collaboration.

#### *4.2 Scenario 2: Meeting of the Minds*

At a minimum, an opportunity exists to continue the conversation between the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the towns in Mecklenburg County to discover a common vision and areas of interest where collaboration and coordination may benefit all parties. This scenario was developed primarily based on key findings discovered during meetings with staff from the City, County, towns in Mecklenburg County, and local non-profit organizations. As summarized in Appendix C, there is a desire for greater collaboration among all of the jurisdictions in the County, and a corresponding fear of the potential negative consequences that can result from a large-scale project, such as staff burnout, duplication of effort, and a reluctance to develop another plan. This scenario meets stakeholder objectives by starting the conversation, while assuaging fears by keeping the effort manageable. The Quality of Life Study and other existing documents may serve as a starting point for this discussion since there is great overlap between the indicators in the Quality of Life Study and sustainability. This scenario would benefit from using an external third party to facilitate meetings.

**How do we get started?** Work with an external facilitator and local government stakeholders to discuss the ideal outcome of the meetings, to invite appropriate stakeholders to attend, and to facilitate meetings. Determine which agency and staff members will be the primary contact.

**What is the deliverable?** A common vision and enhanced communication are the main objectives.

**Is there a governance structure?** No. The goal, at least initially, is to find common areas of interest where it benefits all parties to work together.

**What is the Year 1 staffing plan?**

Position	Role and Assumptions
Project Director	Main point-of-contact for this limited term engagement. Project director will work with the external facilitator, and is an existing CharMeck local government employee
Facilitator	Lead, schedule, and facilitate meetings
Local Government Staff	20 existing CharMeck local government employees contribute SME & support to various aspects of project; (each employee .025 FTE, 4 hours per month)

**What are the estimated Year 1 start-up costs?\*** \$64,717

Item	
Facilitation fees	Two internal pre-meetings, and three facilitated large group meetings
Meeting expenses	Space rental, supplies, food
Contingency Budget	Given the low risk of cost overruns for this scenario no contingency budget is included or recommended

\*Estimated start-up costs include both soft costs such as in-kind staff support and facility rental fees as well as hard costs like consultant fees.

**What is the timeline?**

Week	Action
Week 1	Pre-meeting with City, County, and external facilitator. Determine meeting objectives.
Week 6	Hold first large group meeting and visioning exercise
Week 7	City, County, external facilitator meeting. Are objectives being met? Reassess as needed.
Week 10	Hold second large group meeting
Week 11	City, County, external facilitator meeting. Are objectives being met? Facilitator check-in individually with towns.
Week 14	Hold third large group meeting
Week 15	Reassess progress. What is best path moving forward?

**What will be measured, and how often?** Success will be measured based on if the jurisdictions have a clear understanding of why they are meeting, and walk away with a) a common vision, b) a better understanding of what neighboring jurisdictions are thinking and doing and c) clear ideas for opportunities to work together on initiatives that promote a more sustainable CharMeck region.

**What are the anticipated benefits and challenges?** Benefits include enhanced communication and providing a forum for each of the jurisdictions to share their perspective. Potential benefits also include a great sense of partnership and an open door for future collaboration. Challenges include a possible lack of interest or participation from one or more of the towns in Mecklenburg County, or varying ideas about how to move forward together.

*4.3 Scenario 3: Framework*

Part of the challenge of working together to develop a common sustainability document is that the City, the County, and the towns may have different ideas about what it means to have a community that is sustainable or has an excellent quality of life. By working together with an external consultant and developing a visionary framework, the participating jurisdictions can **agree to a common set of guiding principles that each community is working towards, without proscribing how to get there.** Development of this scenario resulted

primarily from interviews and meetings with staff from the City and County. As noted in Appendix B and C, there is a desire for broadly adopted goals, and recognition that there is a good foundation in many areas impacting sustainability, what is missing is a framework to tie it together. City and County staff recommended that common elements of existing vision and mission statements could be used as a starting point.

**How do we get started?** Determine which jurisdictions are interested in developing a framework. Hire an external consultant and convene participating jurisdictions.

**What is the deliverable?** A visionary framework with a set of common guiding principles that all participating parties are working towards.

**What is the governance structure?** No governance structure would be associated with this scenario.

**What is the Year 1 staffing plan?**

Position	Role
Project Director	Main local government point-of-contact. Project director is an existing CharMeck local government employee. (.15 FTE/year)
Project Manager	PPM is an existing CharMeck local government employee (.10 FTE/year)
Local Government Staff	20 existing CharMeck local government employees provide SME & support to various aspects of project (.05 FTE, 8 hours per month per person)
External Consultant Team	Assumes one externally procured consulting team providing facilitation and subject matter expertise for developing a framework

**What are the estimated Year 1 start-up costs?\* \$154,510**

Item	
External Consultant Team	Assumes one externally procured consulting team providing facilitation and subject matter expertise for developing a multi-jurisdictional CSP
Production and Printing	Assumes publication design and printing of brief “posterizable” document outlining the framework principles
Meeting expenses	Assumes 12 meetings of approximately 25 people
Website Development and Maintenance	Assumes developmental costs of creating new project website for communicating with stakeholders and includes social media tools embedded to site
Contingency Budget	Assumes 5% contingency fund for cost over-runs, change orders or inaccurate budget estimates

\*Estimated start-up costs include both soft costs such as in-kind staff support and facility rental fees as well as hard costs like consultant fees.

**What is the timeline?**

Week	Action
Week 1	Enter into agreement with Consultant
Week 6	Project Director meets with Consultant to establish expectations and timeline
Week 8	Hold first meeting with jurisdictions to develop common guiding principles
Week 12-32	Meet monthly to further develop and refine vision and principles in framework
Week 38	Final version of framework is complete
Week 40	“Posterizable” version of framework is created and distributed

**What are the anticipated benefits and challenges?** Benefits that would result from having a common set of guiding principles include greater understanding and communication about each jurisdiction’s goals, and

setting the stage for future discussions and collaborative opportunities. An additional benefit is that each jurisdiction still determines specifically how to meet the guiding principles. Challenges may include difficulty developing common principles based on the jurisdictions different priorities, and a lack of actionable items, which may lead to poor follow-through.

**What will be measured, and how often?** Each jurisdiction can opt to use indicators or other data to measure how the community is progressing towards meeting the vision and guiding principles. The framework can be updated as needed. Data can be assessed annually.

#### *4.4 Scenario 4: Quality of Life 2.0*

The City of Charlotte has a well-established Quality of Life (QOL) Index, and an associated QOL Study that has been expanded throughout Mecklenburg County and is regularly updated in cooperation with Mecklenburg County and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System, with the support of the Metropolitan Studies Group at the University of North Carolina. **The QOL Study presents a natural starting point from which to build a more integrated sustainability strategy for the CharMeck region.** Many of the indicators in the QOL Study have sustainability implications, as the concepts of sustainability and quality of life have significant overlap.

The 2012 iteration of the Quality of Life Study will include new environmental and health indicators that provide all of Mecklenburg County an improved ability to understand the greatest opportunities for community betterment. It is therefore proposed that the Quality of Life Study is built upon to include a report that prioritizes three to five indicators, sets goals for improvement, describes the plans and programs currently in place that are associated with the indicator, and lays out a timeline for convening stakeholders to address how this metric will be improved over time so that initiatives can be implemented, and the goal can be met. The governing structure for this effort will utilize the existing body that develops the Quality of Life Study.

This scenario was developed based on what ICMA found through research and studies of best practices, and was reinforced during stakeholder interviews and meetings. As seen in Appendix B and C, the majority of stakeholders feel that a sustainability effort that allows for greater coordination and collaboration is warranted. Furthermore, those that support a more complex effort, (beyond Scenarios 1-3), stressed the importance of crafting obtainable, measureable goals. ICMA's expertise and recommended use of performance measurement, as described in Section 11 of this report, supports this inclination. Building on an existing process or incorporating an existing program into a larger endeavor is also a strategy that was used by Atlanta, GA and San Antonio, TX, as described in the Case Studies in Appendix A.

An important aspect of this scenario is to start small and choose indicators that staff can reasonably attend to in addition to their existing duties. As time goes on and goals are achieved, new goals can be set with existing indicators, and/or different indicators can be addressed. In this manner, the CharMeck region will form a sustainability strategy over time, and the effort will remain cost-effective and won't create a great administrative burden. It is recommended that an external consultant assist with the organization and facilitation of this effort and to provide guidance as-needed regarding sustainability strategies, goal-setting, and performance measurement. Hiring a graduate-level intern or part-time entry level staff may also be a helpful and cost-effective solution.

**How do we get started?** Develop CharMeck community engagement process to further refine the concept and determine who will be invited to participate, and at what stage.

**What is the deliverable?** Create an actionable plan that provides guidance for policies, programs and partnerships for maintaining a high quality of life in the CharMeck region. The QOL plan would be periodically updated to reflect the QOL data.

**What is the governance structure?** The existing QOL governance structure can be used, and the towns can be invited to participate. All participants in Quality of Life 2.0 are part of the process on a “pay to play” basis to demonstrate buy-in.

**What is the Year 1 staffing plan?**

Position	Role
Project Director	Main local government point-of-contact. Project director is an existing CharMeck local government employee. (.50 FTE/year)
Communication and Outreach Coordinator	Coordinator is an existing CharMeck local government employee fluent in all facets of traditional and nontraditional communication and outreach. Leads the engagement efforts for the proposed scenario. (.30 FTE/year)
Project Manager	PM is an existing CharMeck local government employee that supports the envisioned scenario with administrative, project management and subject matter expertise (.40 FTE/year)
Local Government Staff	20 existing CharMeck local government employees provide SME & support to various aspects of project (each employee .06 FTE, 10 hours per month)
Quality of Life Study Organization(s)	Assumes funding provided to existing QOL organization(s) to support the actualization of this scenario
External Consulting Team	Assumes externally procured consulting team to provide plan development expertise

**What are the estimated Year 1 start-up costs?\* \$333,064**

Item	
External Consulting Team	Assumes externally procured consulting team to provide plan development expertise
Quality of Life Study Organizations	Assumes funding provided to existing QOL organizations
Meeting expenses	Assumes twelve meetings of approximately 25 people
Printing and Publication Expenses	Assumes publication design and printing of draft and final sustainability plans
Website Development and Maintenance	Assumes costs of modifying existing websites on QOL
Contingency Budget	Assumes 10% contingency fund for cost over-runs, change orders or inaccurate budget estimates

\*Estimated start-up costs include both soft costs such as in-kind staff support and facility rental fees as well as hard costs like consultant fees.

**What is the timeline?**

Week	Action
Week 1	Meeting with City, County, and consultants. Determine project objectives.
Week 3	Invite all Mecklenburg County jurisdictions to participate
Week 7	Hold first meeting with City, County, towns, and consultants. Define objectives and determine which stakeholders to invite to participate.
Week 8	Invite stakeholders to participate
Week 12	Hold meeting with City, County, towns, stakeholders, and consultant. Facilitate discussion and select indicators to focus on over coming year.
Week 16	Hold meeting to continue discussion regarding selected indicators, goals, and how those goals will be met



Week 18	Temperature check. Is project moving forward according to plan? Reassess as needed
Week 20 - 50	Hold monthly meetings to discuss progress towards meeting goals associated with selected indicators
Week 44	Project Manager begin preparing annual report assessing progress over past year
Week 50	Distribute annual report to participating jurisdictions and other interested parties as appropriate

**What are the anticipated benefits and challenges?** Benefits include not having to start from scratch, and the efficiencies gained from using an established process that is understood by the community. Additionally, the availability of historical data will assist with performance measurement. Possible challenges include a lack of data for certain issues, differing opinions regarding which indicators should be the focus, and confusion about the purpose of the QOL Study. Goals may need to be more qualitative than quantitative to achieve consensus.

**What will be measured, and how often?** Quality of Life indicators will be measured. Which indicators specifically will be measured is to be determined. Indicators should be measured on the current QOL Study schedule. Goals should be revisited as the QOL Study is updated.

#### *4.5 Scenario 5: CharMeck Collaborative*

The Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability (LARC) is a flexible network of local governments, COGs, universities, nonprofit organizations and private firms that are exploring “greater coordination and cooperation at the local and regional levels” to share information and implement strategies for sustainability, a green economy and more sustainable communities.<sup>11</sup> One of the key objectives of the effort is to **promote cross-jurisdictional and public private partnerships in support of regional action planning on sustainability and climate change.**

Members of the collaborative include: County of Los Angeles, the cities of Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Santa Monica; Several COGs (South Bay Cities Council of Governments, San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments, Westside Cities Council of Governments); the local air quality management district, port authorities, several private firms, and a host of national and regional nonprofit organizations like Global Green, and the US Green Building Council. The collaborative is operated out of UCLA’s Institute of the Environment and Sustainability and operates under a charter revised in 2009.<sup>12</sup>

Since the establishment of the LARC, a donation was received to hire a part-time Managing Director and development consultant; federal stimulus funding was awarded for region-wide climate action planning; and a Regional Climate Action Sustainability Plan is underway. LARC also commissioned a “Regional Landscape Review of Climate Programs and Policies” to assess and inventory current climate related policies, programs, and activities in the region.<sup>13</sup>

A formal structure would clearly delineate expectations and remove ambiguity as to how a CharMeck partnership is expected to function. When non-profit, private sector, and academic stakeholders were asked to describe model managerial and operational structures that would result in collaboration and information sharing (Appendix B.2), a variety of ideas were shared, but a common theme was the creation of a forum or organized body that encourages greater information sharing.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.environment.ucla.edu/larc/about>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.environment.ucla.edu/larc>

<sup>13</sup> [http://www.environment.ucla.edu/media\\_IOE/files/LARC-Annual-Report-2011-eg-ux5.pdf](http://www.environment.ucla.edu/media_IOE/files/LARC-Annual-Report-2011-eg-ux5.pdf)

**How do we get started?** Enter into a contract with a Management Consultant and convene participating parties to establish a Charter and Governance Policy.

**What is the deliverable?** A formal yet flexible governance structure that promotes collaboration and regional planning, as described in the Charter and Governance Policy documents.

**What is the governance structure?** The LA model uses two standing governance committees – the Steering Committee, which provides general oversight and strategic direction, and the Executive Committee, which provides regular oversight and direction to collaborative members.<sup>14</sup>

**What is the Year 1 staffing plan?**

Position	Role
Project Director	Main local government point-of-contact. Project director is an existing CharMeck local government employee (.60 FTE/year)
Communication and Outreach Coordinator	Coordinator is an existing CharMeck local government employee fluent in all facets of traditional and nontraditional communication and outreach (.10 FTE/year)
Project Manager	Assists Project Director as needed. APM is an existing CharMeck local government employee. (.50 FTE/year)
Local Government Staff	20 existing CharMeck local government employees contribute SME & support to various aspects of project; estimated (.06 FTE , 10 hours per person per month)
External Consultant	Provide research as needed, act as objective third party, and facilitate as necessary
M&O Organization and Staff	Assumes one management and operations organization (external) to provide institutional home and coordinating staff
SME Consultant	Assumes external SME to assist in facilitating and developing collaborative model

**What are the estimated Year 1 start-up costs?\* \$340,305**

Item	
M&O Organization and Staff	Assumes one management and operations organization (external) to provide institutional home and coordinating staff (e.g. local university research center, local nonprofit organization, local firm experienced in coalition/collaborative startup and management)
SME Consultant	Assumes external SME to assist in facilitating and developing collaborative model
Meeting expenses	Assumes twelve meetings of approximately 25 people
Printing and Publication	Assumes publication design and printing of draft and final sustainability plans
Website Development and Maintenance	Assumes developmental costs of creating new project website for communicating with stakeholders and includes social media tools embedded to site
Contingency	Assumes 5% contingency fund for cost over-runs, change orders or inaccurate budget estimates

\*Estimated start-up costs include both soft costs such as in-kind staff support and facility rental fees as well as hard costs like consultant fees.

**What is the timeline?**

Week	Action
Week 1	Enter into agreement with Management Consultant
Week 6	Project Director meets with Management Consultant to establish expectations
Week 10	Convene participating parties for initial meeting to discuss concept and assess support
Week 12-20	Convene participating parties and develop a Charter and Governance Policy

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.environment.ucla.edu/larc/files/LARC\\_Governance%20Policy\\_FIN.pdf](http://www.environment.ucla.edu/larc/files/LARC_Governance%20Policy_FIN.pdf)

Week 24	Establish inaugural Steering Committee and Executive Committee
Week 30	Steering Committee and Executive Committee clarify goals for coming year
Week 32	Begin recruiting members to participate in CharMeck Collaborative
Week 36	Hold first CharMeck Collaborative meeting
Week 40	Develop ideas for CharMeck Collaborative subcommittees
Week 44	Hold second CharMeck Collaborative meeting and vote on subcommittees
Week 52	Hold third CharMeck Collaborative meeting and move into operational phase

**What are the anticipated benefits and challenges?** Benefits include the enhanced communication and organization that result from having a formal yet flexible governing structure. Additionally, there would now be a singular clearinghouse for sustainability issues. A possible challenge is that the collaborative could be cumbersome to manage, and agreement will need to be reached by a number of parties on many issues.

**What will be measured, and how often?** During the first year of developing the CharMeck Collaborative, the main goal will be to develop the Charter and Governance Policy. Success towards this effort can be measured by the number of jurisdictions participating, and continued involvement.

#### *4.6 Scenario 6: Community Sustainability Plan*

While there are many existing documents that touch on sustainability topics, often times the process of meeting and coordinating efforts can be equally important as the deliverable of a physical plan. **A CSP could be developed using material from existing documents, and gleaning additional information from internal and external stakeholders.** Each chapter of the plan could include background information such as progress that has already been made regarding a particular topic, and programs that are currently in place. Also included would be goals attached to metrics (i.e. reduce energy used in commercial buildings 15% by 2025), and implementation steps detailing how the goal will be met.

Sustainability Plans and Climate Action Plans are a common model currently used by local governments seeking to better coordinate sustainability activities and communicate past successes and future plans. The purpose of this feasibility study (looking at CSPs specifically) and the pervasiveness of sustainability plans were the main motivators for including this scenario in the study. Additionally, even though CSPs vary from municipality to municipality, it should be noted that among the stakeholders that were interviewed (see Appendix B), virtually all City and County staff are familiar with the features of a CSP, as were most external stakeholders.

**How do we get started?** Determine partners and the interest of the towns in participating in a CSP.

**What is the deliverable?** A CSP document that serves as a communication tool and knits together various efforts and organizations working to promote a sustainable CharMeck.

**What is the governance structure?** Task Force made up of one or two staff from the participating jurisdictions, and external stakeholders, including at a minimum the Centralina COG; Metropolitan Studies Group at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte; Foundation for the Carolinas; Chamber of Commerce; and one or two local non-profits focused on sustainability issues. Develop a larger Steering Committee that includes additional external stakeholders, including K-12, academia, faith communities, social entrepreneurs, regional partnerships, philanthropic partners, etc.

### What is the Year 1 staffing plan?

Position	Role
Project Director	Main local government point-of-contact. Project director is an existing CharMeck local government employee. (.75 FTE/year)
Communication and Outreach Coordinator	Coordinator is an existing CharMeck local government employee fluent in all facets of traditional and nontraditional communication and outreach (.30 FTE/year)
Project Manager	PM is an existing CharMeck local government employee (.60 FTE/year)
Local Government Staff	20 existing CharMeck local government employees provide SME & support to various aspects of project (.09 FTE, 15 hours per month per person)
External Consultant Team	Assumes one externally procured consulting team providing facilitation and subject matter expertise for developing a multi-jurisdictional CSP

### What are the estimated Year 1 start-up costs?\* \$422,930

Item	
External Consultant Team	Assumes one externally procured consulting team providing facilitation and subject matter expertise for developing a multi-jurisdictional CSP
Production and Printing	Assumes publication design and printing of draft and final sustainability plans
Meeting expenses	Assumes twelve meetings of approximately 25 people
Website Development and Maintenance	Assumes developmental costs of creating new project website for communicating with stakeholders and includes social media tools embedded to site
Contingency Budget	Assumes 10% contingency fund for cost over-runs, change orders or inaccurate budget estimates

\*Estimated start-up costs include both soft costs such as in-kind staff support and facility rental fees as well as hard costs like consultant fees.

### What is the timeline?

Week	Action
Week 1	Enter into agreement with Consultant
Week 6	Project Director meets with Consultant to establish expectations and timeline
Week 8-10	Hold individual meetings with potential participating jurisdictions to discuss concept and assess support
Week 12	Convene initial Task Force meeting. Determine which indicators/topics will be the focus of the Sustainability Plan
Week 14	Convene initial Steering Committee and review indicators/topics. Reach consensus on which indicators should be the focus of the plan.
Week 16	Task Force meets, discusses Steering Committee meeting outcome, and confirms which indicators will be the focus of the plan
Week 18	Steering Committee meets, subcommittees are developed based on the indicators that are the focus of the plan
Week 20-40	Subcommittees meet and develop goals and initiatives that will allow goals to be met
Week 44	Subcommittees submit final goals and initiatives to Task Force
Week 48	Task Force approves final goals and initiatives
Week 52	Writing of sustainability plan draft begins

**What are the anticipated benefits and challenges?** Benefits include having a standalone document that outlines sustainability successes and strategies that can be used internally and externally as a communication tool, and when applying for certain grants. Challenges include the time and money required to develop a meaningful CSP.

**What will be measured, and how often?** The first year of the CSP development process will focus on convening the interested parties and developing goals and initiatives. During the second year, the actual writing of the plan will take place, and will be presented to elected bodies for adoption. Once the plan is adopted, the initiatives will be measured as is relevant and possible.

#### *4.7 Things to Think About: Annual Report and Website*

- A brief, annual staff report could be created as an add-on for any scenario. The report could update the elected bodies from the participating jurisdictions regarding the activities of the governing structure over the previous year, and future opportunities for collaboration, such as grant applications, projects, studies, etc.
- Regardless of which scenario is selected, to best communicate information about current programs and successes, plans, and future initiatives that support a sustainable community, it is recommended that a website is created. The website could be a content-management system website, or one that can be easily updated by the Project Director. The website would serve a three-fold purpose: first, to communicate current programs, plans and initiatives; second, to serve as a two-way communication tool for collecting information, questions, and recommendations from the community; and third, to communicate future programs, plans, and initiatives. The website would visibly demonstrate which initiatives are housed in the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, or the towns in Mecklenburg County. Furthermore, local government staff and community members could use the website to learn about existing programs.
- Local libraries would be a natural partner for cross-promoting a project website or two-way communication platform and assisting interested residents who may need additional help interacting on the website. Adequate marketing of the website will be very important for getting robust input from residents. By using libraries, residents may be reached that otherwise may not have been. The website could be used to gauge community interest in sustainability issues and determine which issues draw the most interest from the community.

## **SECTION 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County have a unique challenge ahead as the scenarios above are considered. The jurisdictions in Mecklenburg County have developed a number of policy documents that address sustainability issues, not to mention those developed by regional planning organizations and other stakeholders. In many ways, this is a double edged sword. Because CharMeck is neither at the beginning of the sustainability planning process nor the end, the challenge will lie in deciding where to jump in the middle, with whom, and in what direction. While ICMA developed possible scenarios and made recommendations for moving forward, ultimately further stakeholder outreach will need to be done regarding the scenario options and the concerns and preferences of elected bodies, staff, and external stakeholders.

*ICMA recommends that the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the towns in Mecklenburg County build on Scenario 3 (Framework) to move forward with Scenario 4 (Quality of Life 2.0).*

That being said, based on research and analysis, interviews, and stakeholder meetings, ICMA recommends that the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the towns in Mecklenburg County build on Scenario 3.0 (Framework) to move forward with Scenario 4.0 (Quality of Life 2.0). Scenario 3 (Framework) is extensive enough to produce the collaborative results that are desired, yet

restricted enough in scope to still be manageable with limited resources. Once a common vision or framework is developed, the participating entities will need to determine if there is sufficient interest and resources to pursue building on the Quality of Life Study. Scenario 3 presents an ideal starting point for getting each of the jurisdictions on the same page with a common vision. If there is sufficient interest in building on the Quality of Life Study, then Scenario 4 (Quality of Life 2) should be pursued as the recommended scenario. This option presents the CharMeck community with the opportunity to develop a common vision, while at the same time, create specific and measurable goals using a well-understood starting point that already includes historical data, the two largest jurisdictions, and a third-party advisor.

Scenario 1 (Business As Usual) is not recommended given that community stakeholders, City and County staff, and the elected bodies of the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County have expressed interest in seeing an effort come to life that promotes coordination and collaboration on sustainability issues. During stakeholder interviews, ICMA repeatedly heard the desire for the jurisdictions in Mecklenburg County to create some sort of effort that would knit together separate policies and programs that tie to sustainability. While Business As Usual could eventually lead to that point, an effort that is focused, clearly communicated, and builds on the current level of interest will be better received. While Scenario 2 (Meeting of the Minds) would provide a good starting point for discussion, it falls flat of meeting the needs of the CharMeck community, and lacks a deliverable specific enough to meet community desires and assist with communications.

Scenarios 5 and 6 are not preferred scenarios as they would likely be too weighty and cumbersome to manage without a significant investment of time and money. Sustainability would need to be a key priority for the jurisdictions involved in order for Scenarios 5 and 6 to be worth the time and effort. Additionally, given that the CharMeck community already has a number of valuable resources, time and energy would be better spent building from current efforts and keeping the scope of work manageable and achievable.

#### *What CharMeck Can Achieve by Developing a CSP*

- Help knit together all of the various plans, policies, programs, partnerships and activities that are already underway in the community.
- Fulfill a desire expressed by local government staff, elected officials, business community, nonprofits, and citizens to have a conversation about sustainability.
- Create a centralized, articulated way to communicate sustainability initiatives to the public and external stakeholders.
- Provide a plan that people can rally around for improving their community.
- Cohesion and collaboration among various stakeholder groups, including public and private entities, afforded by a CSP would allow for common prioritization and effectiveness in achieving long-term goals.
- Decrease operation “in silos” to increase efficiencies of scale across departments, between city and county initiatives, and across the landscape of private initiatives engaged in environmental, economic, and social improvement efforts. For example, the City of Durham and Durham County are purchasing electrical vehicles and installing charging stations throughout Durham.
- Help structure ideas for a livable community where people want to live, work, and play.
- Provide a forum for conversations that can provide insight into what kind of community residents want to have now and in the future.
- Policymakers will be able to make better decisions with a comprehensive plan to move toward common goals that have been developed with input from the community. For example, the elected body in Onondaga County, NY committed \$1 million to agricultural protection programs in the county’s Sustainable Development Plan.
- Show how economic development approaches could be strengthened through innovative policies, programs and activities in areas like energy, workforce development, bureaucratic streamlining and cooperation.
- Increase stakeholder awareness as a result of interactive participation.
- Position CharMeck for grant funding, awards, and recognition. For example the City of Baltimore was awarded a grant to engage non-profit organizations in identifying GHG reduction strategies; the City of Dubuque secured new grant funding from public and private entities and leveraged its sustainability efforts to create new partnerships with firms like IBM; and Shelby County, Tennessee received a grant to fund a strategy included in their sustainability plan.

Regardless of which scenario is chosen, and in whatever form, the following are additional recommendations. These recommendations are based on information ICMA learned conducting case studies; meetings and interviews of local stakeholders and government staff; a review of existing CharMeck programs and documents; and research based on ICMA surveys and other data. Please see the Appendix for more detailed information, including full case studies (Appendix A), summaries of local stakeholder interviews (Appendix B), stakeholder meeting notes (Appendix C), and additional resources consulted (Appendix D).

### *Additional Recommendations*

- ***Framing the Issue and the Path Forward.*** The word “sustainability” has become somewhat of a lightning rod and it may be that the CharMeck effort should be branded differently and in a way that resonates with as many stakeholder constituencies as possible. Themes, branding, taglines and terms should be carefully considered when moving forward. Additionally, it should be clear that sustainability is perceived differently and in most places is interpreted at the local level. A path forward that allows some communities and jurisdictions to focus on larger sets of issues while others may only opt for a smaller subset would seemingly provide a viable approach for a CSP. Sustainability planning need not change the individual character of the communities in Mecklenburg County.
- ***Develop a Mechanism for Working Together.*** Convene stakeholders in a cross-jurisdictional and multi-stakeholder process. Hold a meeting of the minds with, at a minimum, staff from each of the jurisdictions in Mecklenburg County. This will afford an opportunity to begin discussing priorities, goals, and opportunities for collaboration, now and in the future.
- ***Can You Hear Me Now?*** An essential early step for any path forward is to clearly communicate all of the ongoing successes and initiatives that have been implemented, and goals that have been met in the distant or recent past. Any plan should not only include actionable steps, but also serve as a communications tool and there are many strategies for making existing and future endeavors transparent.
- ***Draw Some Lines.*** A CharMeck CSP process should be clearly differentiated from other regional planning processes. At the same time, any CharMeck CSP effort will need to discover the synergy with efforts such as CONNECT, regional economic development approaches led by the Chamber of Commerce and others, energy plans, healthy community, neighborhood revitalization efforts, comprehensive planning exercises and the many initiatives that have a taste of sustainability in a metropolitan area such as CharMeck.
- ***Build from Existing Resources.*** The CharMeck region has a number of existing plans, policy documents, and data sets and these should be used strategically. Build from this existing set of information rather than starting from scratch. In particular, the Quality of Life Study and measures provide a leverage point that many communities do not already have.
- ***Leverage the Private Sector and Economic Development.*** The CharMeck region is home to the headquarters and/or major facilities of numerous Fortune 500 firms and others including Bank of America, Duke Energy, Siemens, Goodrich Lowes, and others. It seems clear that a key theme of a CSP should include goals, objectives strategies, benchmarks and measures focused on business retention and expansion (BRE), economic development, and income and job growth.
- ***Single Point of Entry.*** When getting started, CharMeck needs to establish a single point of contact that is easily identified and can clearly communicate the stages and phases, successes and challenges of developing a CharMeck CSP. Similarly, an advisory committee or board of directors that can provide strategic direction might also be warranted at the outset of a planning process.
- ***Meaningfully Engage the Community.*** Based on the changing expectations of communities throughout the US and as evidenced in the CharMeck community, CharMeck residents have an

expectation that they will be engaged using a variety of methods. To leave external stakeholders out of the process would be detrimental it is recommended that a robust engagement process is used and a variety of methods to include the community in planning efforts at the earliest possible stage, particularly for scenarios 2, 3 and 4. Consider tapping local external partners to assist with engagement and implementation, especially non-profit organizations that are already doing work that supports a sustainable CharMeck.

- **Two Key Partners.** The Metropolitan Studies Group at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte and the Foundation for the Carolinas should be considered as priority partners in each of the scenarios. The Metropolitan Studies Group is already familiar with the indicators that are relevant to sustainability and with CharMeck local government staff. The Foundation for the Carolinas has successfully engaged the community on a broad range of issues, compensated through a variety of funding arrangements.
- **Keep it Manageable and Achievable.** Determine what can reasonably be accomplished with available resources and move forward accordingly. As expressed during stakeholder interviews, the community is more interested in seeing the jurisdictions in Mecklenburg County successfully move forward with a small-scale effort rather than creating an effort so comprehensive that it's too cumbersome to manage and too challenging to implement.
- **Get Creative With Funding.** To be successful, a CharMeck CSP planning process will need to be adequately funded and staffed both for the initial start-up phases, and to continue onward into implementation of a strategy or plan. Any and all possibilities ranging from general funds to special fees to external funding from community foundations, national foundations or corporate sponsors should be explored. The city of Baltimore provides one particularly viable option for external funding as they have significantly leveraged enthusiastic support from the local community foundation to create some innovative approaches to their sustainability efforts.



# PART B – ANALYSIS

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To meet the objectives of this feasibility study and provide a useful set of findings, different scenarios for moving forward, and recommendations, research was conducted both at the national and CharMeck level. The results of this research are in the sections that follow.

## **SECTION 6.0 SUSTAINABILITY POLICIES, PROGRAMS, PARTNERSHIPS AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES FROM AROUND THE UNITED STATES**

Many cities and counties throughout the United States have formalized their support of sustainability with the adoption of sustainability plans, strategies and tactics, community wide initiatives and other types of approaches. In many cases, sustainability efforts are a forward looking communication tool for understanding what measures that local governments and the community will implement in the coming years. Some initiatives also discuss the community's past successes and programs that are already in-place as a means of highlighting efforts to date from which to build future success.

Starting in 2006, ICMA began conducting focused quantitative and qualitative research on local government sustainability policies, programs, partnerships and performance measures. ICMA's research is largely based on a 2010 national survey of "Local Government Sustainability Policies and Programs" as well as several follow on initiatives, which have been supported by a variety of funding agencies. ICMA's 2010 survey was conducted through a collaboration of ICMA and researchers at Arizona State University, and survey findings were further developed into a report that was underwritten by the IBM Center for the Business of Government.<sup>15</sup>

ICMA's original survey was sent to 8,569 local governments with a population of more than 2,500 residents. The response rate was 25.4% with 2,176 local governments responding. The survey results mirrored findings evident in similar surveys distributed by the National Association of Counties (NACO) and the National League of Cities (NLC) that were also distributed during the same time frame. ICMA's survey covered a variety of topic areas including:

- Policy priorities for issues such as the environment, economy, social justice, climate change, green jobs, energy, housing and public transportation as well as the level of activity that the government had undertaken to actualize specific sustainability policies through:
  - Adoption of resolutions with specific policy goals
  - Adoption of plans with specific targets, benchmarks or performance measures
  - Establishment of a sustainability plan or policy by the chief executive
  - Appointment of a citizens committee, commission or task force on sustainability
  - Establishing a dedicated budget for a sustainability effort or initiative
  - Dedicated staff to the sustainability effort.
- Specific policies and programs in key sustainability topic areas such as water conservation and storm water management; recycling and solid waste management; energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy; transportation improvements and innovations; building construction, retrofitting and land use; social inclusion and environmental justice; as well as a variety of other topics not easily categorized (e.g. local education programs, green procurement programs, etc.)

The survey data and follow-up case study research suggested that the enthusiasm factor around sustainability was high in many places, but had not necessarily carried over into comprehensive activities by government.

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<sup>15</sup> Svava, James; Anna Read, Evelina Moulder. 2011. *Breaking New Ground: Promoting Environmental and Energy Programs in Local Government*. IBM Center for the Business of Government. Washington, DC.

Most governments had undertaken comprehensive activities in only a few policy areas. And while many places and efforts such as New York City's PlanNYC, Portland, Oregon's recognized initiatives, and a few others received wide recognition in the popular press and sustainability circles, the reality is that most communities are still in the infancy stages of creating more sustainable communities.

Some of the key data points from ICMA's survey on local government sustainability policies and programs are highlighted below and provide CharMeck stakeholders with quantitative information about what other communities have said about their sustainability efforts.

*Most governments have undertaken comprehensive activities in only a few policy areas.*

- Less than one in five respondents reported having a sustainability policy or plan with specific targets and benchmarks
- The average number of FTEs dedicated to a community's sustainability effort are 1.9
- 26.7% of respondents reported appointing a citizens committee, task force or commission for their sustainability efforts
- More than 44% suggested that they had a plan for tree canopy preservation and planting and 41.5% had been recognized with Tree City USA designation
- Approximately one-third of all local jurisdictions reported taking actions to conserve and preserve drinking water sources with a little more than one-fourth offering incentives to encourage conservation by the city, residents, and businesses
- 75.7% reported having a community wide recycling program for paper, plastic and glass for residential properties, while fewer (44.9%) had similar programs for commercial property; roughly half of all respondents had programs for household hazardous waste recycling and household electronic waste; and approximately 33% collect organic material for composting
- Less than 10% indicated that they managed any programs that targeted energy reduction by low income residents or commercial entities and few offered any incentives (grants, loans or tax incentives) to reduce energy consumption in the community
- Many communities have undertaken transportation actions to improve their communities including expanding bike lanes on streets (34.2%), adding biking and walking trails or greenways (61.4%), and requiring sidewalks in new developments (54.4%)
- 35.4% have established zoning codes to encourage more mixed use development; 20.8% noted that their established or new zoning codes would permit renewable energy production (wind, solar, geothermal) in residences; and approximately 22% of communities indicated that they had an active program for returning brownfield, vacant property and other underutilized properties to more productive uses.
- More than 52% supported a local farmers market and 28.8% offered public land for use as community gardens, but very few had provided any incentives to encourage use of locally grown produce or other commodities
- Many communities reported providing a variety of programs to encourage social inclusion particularly around financial support/incentives for affordable housing (32.4%), housing options for the elderly (27.2%); digital inclusion (27.1%) and after school programs (26.3%)
- Fewer than 15% noted that they reported on quality of life indicators such as education, culture, diversity and social well-being

Sustainability actions in the United States can be analyzed based on type of government, geography, population size, and receptiveness to particular types of policies and priorities. For example, ICMA research indicates that communities with a council manager form of government tend to have slightly higher adoption

rates of programs and policies to create more sustainable communities. Additionally, there is always a “state effect” in local government adoption of policies and programs. In those places where state-mandated or incentivized policies are evident, there are naturally higher levels of adoption by local governments as a result. State laws also impact the amount of control that local governments are able to exert. North Carolina is a “Dillon’s Rule” state, which means that local governments cannot take actions that are not specifically laid out in the state code.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, one of the defining factors of successful sustainability policies, programs, and partnerships can be population size. On average, the larger the city or county, the more that is being done to promote sustainability, with the number of activities increasing as population size increases. This statistic can be deceiving as in many smaller jurisdictions there may not be the need for particular policies and programs or alternatively the need for something may be fulfilled through shared arrangements with other nearby towns or a surrounding county, such as public health or other social services.

*On average, the larger the city or county, the more that is being done to promote sustainability.*

## SECTION 7.0 PUBLIC/PRIVATE AND CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Key findings were developed based on research or stakeholder interviews and meetings. Below are the key findings relevant to public/private and cross-jurisdictional partnerships. Following the key findings is research and analysis that supports the findings.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Survey Says...** According to ICMA survey research, local governments are motivated to enter into intergovernmental arrangements for numerous reasons such as saving money, achieving economies of scale, strengthening collaborative intergovernmental relations, promoting regional service integration, and assessing technical expertise.

**Opportunities for collaboration and coordination.** By working together to develop a sustainability strategy, opportunities to collaborate and better coordinate efforts will present themselves. Often times, the relationships built and information shared during the planning process is as important as the final outcome of a document in-hand. Regional cooperation is especially important for issues such as air quality, water quality and conservation, and transportation, since these issues do not abide by jurisdictional boundaries.

**Say it ain’t so.** ICMA data showcases the main obstacles for entering into intergovernmental arrangements include perceived losses of community control, internal opposition from staff and elected officials, concerns about managing and monitoring when control is decentralized, opposition from citizens, and a lack of neighboring governments that are willing or able to enter into a relationship.

### Research and Analysis Discussion

Since the arrival of the Great Recession, local and state governments have been confronted with increasingly difficult policy and program choices in response to declining economies and growing budget constraints. Over the last few years, there appears to have been an upsurge in cross-jurisdictional cooperation on issues and in service areas such as public safety dispatch, recreation, public works, emergency preparedness, water supplies, GIS, public health and numerous others.

<sup>16</sup> Sellers, Matthew, and Jacqueline Byers. December 2010. *County Authority: A State by State Report*. National Association of Counties.

According to Frank Benest, ICMA member, former City Manager of Brea, California and Palo Alto, California, and long-time advocate and consultant on cross-jurisdictional cooperation:

*Some of the key commonalities ... include (1) the need for internal champions to shepherd the process through the many challenges ahead; (2) relationship building and outreach processes for problem solving among partnering jurisdictions and agencies; (3) avoiding as much as feasible the creation of another level of government; and (4) starting small, building trust and momentum for future efforts and expansion of an effectively managed model.*

Local governments have often worked together through formalized structures such as regional and metropolitan planning organizations (RPOs and MPOs) as well as councils of government (COGS) and mutual aid arrangements for emergency preparedness and response. The concept of cross-jurisdictional collaboration is not a new one for local governments with models ranging from shared services; outsourcing to public-private partnerships, joint powers authority (JPA) to collaborative purchasing.

In many places, cross-jurisdictional cooperation is gaining traction because the old models of responding to crises —continued cost cutting and reductions in force, reduced services or new taxation—are either insufficient or politically difficult to implement. And while the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) provided some relief for state and local governments, a similar stimulus effort is not expected in the near or long term. Several states have also formalized shared services as a priority for their municipalities including New York State, which provides resources and publications on shared services for local jurisdictions.<sup>17</sup>

*Cross-jurisdictional cooperation is gaining traction because the old models of responding to crises —continued cost cutting and reductions in force, reduced services or new taxation—are either insufficient or politically difficult to implement.*

Sustainability as a regional effort has been promoted by the federal government in recent years. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant program has provided, through two rounds of funding, nearly \$200-million for more than 70 regional planning efforts focused on:

support(ing) metropolitan and multijurisdictional planning efforts that integrate housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments in a manner that empowers jurisdictions to consider the interdependent challenges of: (1) economic competitiveness and revitalization; (2) social equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity; (3) energy use and climate change; and (4) public health and environmental impact.<sup>18</sup>

Locally, the **Centralina Council of Governments** was awarded nearly \$5-million in 2011 to develop the *CONNECT Vision: Connecting Vision to Plan*. The goals of the project are to translate the adopted *CONNECT* Regional Vision into an implementable planning document with performance metrics, inter-jurisdictional collaboration, civic engagement and innovative partnerships. The final output is expected to be a regional plan for sustainable development across a wide swath of central and southern North Carolina. Other grantees in the state of North Carolina included:

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/lgli/shared.htm>

<sup>18</sup> [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/sustainable\\_housing\\_communities/sustainable\\_communities\\_regional\\_planning\\_grants](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/sustainable_housing_communities/sustainable_communities_regional_planning_grants)

- Cape Fear Council of Governments (\$1,130,000)
- Land of Sky Regional Council (\$1,600,000); and
- Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (\$1,600,000)

EECBG funding provided opportunities for jurisdictions to collaborate in new kinds of ways. In Prince George’s County, located in Maryland on the eastern border of the District of Columbia, nine jurisdictions in the county successfully cooperated on a grant to install solar panels on each of their town hall facilities and are using the savings from reduced energy costs and sales of renewable energy credits (RECs) to fund scholarships for county students. Other initiatives have used sustainability as the anchor subject for promoting regional collaborations, such as the Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for Climate Action and Sustainability.<sup>19</sup>

As part of the benchmarking case studies performed for this study, several communities noted that they intended to engage surrounding jurisdictions but for a variety of reasons, engagement has yet to occur.

- Asheville and Buncombe County have each adopted sustainability initiatives covering the greater metropolitan area, although formal cooperation is not yet evident
- Atlanta adopted a plan specifically for the City of Atlanta and its citizens. A long-term goal is to have bordering jurisdictions participate in the plan in ways yet to be determined.
- The City of Durham and Durham County developed a joint sustainability office and devised budgetary strategies for working cooperatively with funding targeted for specific city or county initiatives
- Nashville and Davidson County operate a metropolitan government so there is no layering of services around sustainability
- Onondaga County, New York intends to incorporate the various suburban and rural towns and villages in the implementation of their new plan; however, there has been resistance from some of the communities outside the urban core due to Agenda 21.
- Palo Alto’s efforts are not integrated with nearby communities, although the City’s initiatives are loosely linked with other jurisdictions in the San Francisco Bay area
- Shelby County’s effort includes both the City and County governments to ensure that activities are not overly duplicative; however, there is little interaction with smaller suburban and surrounding jurisdictions within the county.

## SECTION 8.0 THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Key findings were developed based on research or stakeholder interviews and meetings. Below are the key findings relevant to community engagement. Following the key findings is research and analysis that supports the findings.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Engagement beyond Public Hearings.** Community engagement is an important part of developing a CSP. By inviting the community to have a seat at the table, CharMeck local governments can hear from stakeholders about common areas of interest and goals. By participating in the engagement process, stakeholders will have greater buy-in and understanding of the project. CharMeck stakeholders have successfully used community engagement tactics such as small group discussions, meetings with established civic groups, automated calls, traditional mail surveys, and online outreach like the development of project websites, the use of two-way communication tools, and surveys.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.environment.ucla.edu/larc>

**External Partnerships are Key.** As noted in ICMA’s survey research,<sup>20</sup> more than a quarter of reporting communities responded that an advisory commission or task force had been appointed to support the community’s sustainability efforts. External, non-governmental partners also often assist governments in establishing goals and objectives and in meeting them through implementation of sustainability activities. For example, Atlanta works with nonprofits, academia, government (EPA Region 4) and other stakeholders to make sure goals are representative and properly calibrated. They also utilize these partners for implementation, for example, nonprofit Trees Atlanta, partners to help Atlanta meet goals in tree planting.

**Key Stakeholders.** Successful sustainability strategies are often built with input from engaged partners in private industry, nonprofits, foundations, academia, chambers of commerce, faith communities, and other community organizations.

### *Research and Analysis Discussion*

A recent survey conducted by the National League of Cities, which provided the foundation for their report, *Making Democracy Work—Municipal Officials Views about Public Engagement*, revealed that more than 80% of local governments used public engagement processes for help in guiding decisions<sup>21</sup>. The survey also revealed that municipal officials felt that there was a knowledge gap and that both local governments and residents did not have the necessary skills, which minimizes the effectiveness of a citizen engagement process.

There are numerous approaches for citizen engagement, but it is important to understand which tools are most effective in different situations. Citizen surveys can be used to collect information about citizen opinions on local government services; identifying needs for new or modified actions; and preferences for particular community policies. Town hall meetings, focus groups, design charrettes, facilitated workshops, and local symposia are additional engagement techniques that can be used in a variety of settings.

Public engagement conversations are often about how to achieve meaningful participation, but sometimes who is involved can provide interesting insights. In developing its sustainability strategy, the City of Baltimore, in addition to convening and hosting sustainability meetings, also organized a Youth Advisory Group. This group hosted a one day event that attracted more than 150 students from public and private schools, and provided time for young people to voice their concerns and priorities for a more sustainable Baltimore.<sup>22</sup>

Northampton, Massachusetts used a 28-month community planning process to facilitate the development of their sustainability plan, which was published in January 2008. Citizen engagement included nine focus groups and neighborhood meetings, which were organized to gather information on the following:

- Characteristics and community values that should guide Northampton;
- Social, economic and physical changes that have most affected the community;
- Areas of conflict among various goals and visions for a sustainable Northampton;
- Key areas of concern around sustainability; and
- Key actions, policies or infrastructure improvements needed to support a sustainable vision.

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<sup>20</sup> ICMA Survey on Local Government Sustainability Policies and Programs, 2010.

<sup>21</sup> National League of Cities, 2009. *Making Local Democracy Work, Municipal Officials Views About Public Engagement*. Center for Research and Innovations. Washington, DC.

<sup>22</sup> City of Baltimore, 2010. *The Baltimore Sustainability Plan*.

Northampton also implemented a citizen survey that was distributed to every household in the jurisdiction and resulted in over 3,000 responses and a 35% response rate. Surveys revealed information across a range of topic areas such as environment, land use, economic development, housing, equity, and residence. A few months later, the city held two workshops, which gathered further input from constituents by allowing them to comment on the city’s summary of public input to date.<sup>23</sup>

In creating their sustainability action plan, the City of Corvallis, Oregon created an inclusive engagement process. A communications team for the planning process used a variety of electronic and print outreach tools to let citizens know about upcoming meetings and other events including town hall meetings. Corvallis held four town hall meetings with several hundred people in attendance at each. In between each of the town hall meetings, twelve work groups conducted background research and made preliminary recommendations on issues like community inclusion, housing, and water management. During the town hall meetings, organizers used electronic keypad polling to gather opinions about community priorities and helped to give each of the several hundred people in attendance at the meetings the opportunity to express an opinion, even if simply registering a vote.

ICMA’s 2010 survey on local government sustainability policies and programs asked about different levels of citizen engagement primarily those that were formally organized and specifically chartered by the local government. **Table A** below provides some illustration.

Table A: Number of Communities that Have Used Citizen Engagement Committees, Commissions, or Task Forces as Part of their Sustainability Efforts <sup>24</sup>			
Population	Total # Reporting (2176)	# Responding to Question (582)	% Reporting (26.7%)
1,000,000+	13	6	46.2%
500,000 – 1,000,000	21	10	47.6%
250,000 – 499,999	32	8	25.0%
100,000 – 249,999	120	49	40.8%
50,000 – 99,999	196	68	34.7%
25,000 – 49,999	272	76	27.9%
10,000 – 24,999	556	176	31.7%
5,000 – 9,999	480	110	22.9%
2,500 – 4,999	483	78	16.1%
Under 2,500	3		
Geographic Region			
Northeast	382	162	42.4
North Central	716	161	22.5
South	625	140	22.4
West	453	119	26.3

An important consideration for any engagement effort is how to apply and manage the rapidly evolving information technologies that are continually emerging and evolving across multiple channels and platforms. These include social networks like Facebook and Twitter as well as the exploding “apps” marketplace now

<sup>23</sup> City of Northampton, 2008. *Sustainable Northampton, Comprehensive Plan*.

<sup>24</sup> ICMA Survey on Local Government Sustainability Policies and Programs



available for smart phones. Regardless of how one may personally feel about these new technologies and communication channels it is clear that resistance is futile. They are operating in every community and can be a source of information or of disinformation, and can no longer be ignored.

A recent report from the University of Pennsylvania's Fels Institute of Government suggests the following:

- Social media create conversation and discussions rather than one directional information flow, and that "much of the value added to posts is provided by users who respond and recommend them in near real time."
- Users of the service can "exercise great discretion of their personal channel, subscribing only to the information that they want"
- Social media is interactive and can travel much faster among constituents through viral networks than most other communication channels.<sup>25</sup>

An article in ICMA's *Municipal Yearbook 2010*, "Citizen Engagement: An Evolving Process" points out that approximately 10% of local governments use social networking technologies to inform citizens about council meetings and agendas.<sup>26</sup> However, other studies reveal that more and more government agencies, across the Federal, State, and local spectrum are utilizing social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Tumblr, and Twitter, along with other tools such as podcasts, blogs, vlogs, wikis, threaded discussion boards, and even instant messaging to convey and receive information.

Social networking has quickly evolved from a way for college kids to stay connected into a dynamic tool that local governments can and should embrace as a means of one and two way communication with a growing number of citizens that often cannot or will not participate in more traditional methods such as council meetings or planning committee discussions.

The Public Works Department in the City of El Dorado, Kansas uses a Twitter feed to update residents about road conditions, severe weather events, as well as code enforcement reminders.<sup>27</sup> With nearly 3,000 followers, the Water Bureau in the City of Portland, Oregon provides updates and information through Twitter feeds to residents about water conversation, usage and more.<sup>28</sup>

With more than 5,500 followers, Asheville, North Carolina uses a Facebook page to communicate with constituents about a full range of issues. Some communities are using new technologies integrated with Facebook and other online applications to allow citizens to provide formal comments about government policies and programs.

There are several third party tools available as well that are designed to enhance online community engagement efforts. The City of Palo Alto's open city hall forum has put several issues in front of citizens, including a conversation about high speed rail, allowing residents to share valuable commentary that can be used in the decision-making process.<sup>29</sup> Another engagement tool is a website that allows for two-way communication like the online platform Mindmixer. This tool has been used to engage North Carolina

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<sup>25</sup> Kingsley, Chris, 2010. Making the Most of Social Media. Penn Fels Institute of Government, Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>26</sup> Moulder, Evelina, 2010. "Citizen Engagement: An Evolving Process." The Municipal Year Book, 2010. ICMA Press. Washington, DC (pgs. 28-32).

<sup>27</sup> Fisk, Jonathan, 2009. "Web 2.0: The Next Step in Citizen Engagement?" *Kansas Government Journal*. League of Kansas Municipalities (pp. 234-236).

<sup>28</sup> See <http://twitter.com/#!/portlandwater>

<sup>29</sup> See [http://apps.facebook.com/peakdemocracy/portals/5/Forum\\_94/Issue\\_252?a=97](http://apps.facebook.com/peakdemocracy/portals/5/Forum_94/Issue_252?a=97)

residents on several efforts, including Your Parks Your Future Raleigh, Piedmont Voice, LiveWorkPlay Durham, Greensboro Connects, and WalkBike NC.<sup>30</sup> Murfreesboro, Tennessee used the digital media player developed by Granicus to increase web traffic and online media viewership – to the tune of 12,000 hits in one month.<sup>31</sup>

Moving beyond the standard social media technologies, several communities have joined the “apps” movement and are encouraging local software developers to create new tools for the proliferating number of smart phones and other mobile platforms used by every day citizens. New York City launched its BigApps contest that rewards developers of the most creative, best implemented, and impactful applications for delivering information from the City of New York's [NYC.gov Data Mine](http://nyc.gov/data) to interested users.<sup>32</sup> The overall prize winner in New York provided users with information on how to find the nearest subway station.

Similar contests have been offered in Washington, DC and Portland, Oregon. In Portland, the Portland Bike to Train app helps users optimize a bike ride to the nearest transportation node and PDX Bus app gives real time information about mass transit arrival times. Several other communities have enlisted app developers to create mobile services that allow citizens to report problems or issues in their community. Some of the existing systems allow a person to open the application, tap a service request tab like “potholes” or “graffiti,” upload a picture and an address of the problem and submit directly to the city’s 311 or other citizen relationship management system. In Boston, Citizen Connect is a mobile application that allows iPhone and Android users to report issues in their neighborhood. Non-emergency Reports are routed to the appropriate service provider for follow up or work orders.

Regardless of the tools used for citizen engagement, if used effectively they should provide useful information and a foundation for shared understanding of key sustainability issues. With this knowledge, a community can begin a dialogue on what elements of sustainability are important for it to undertake.

Case studies of communities similar to Charlotte-Mecklenburg revealed that effective engagement of the public has proven to be a rewarding endeavor for communities who have successfully created and implemented sustainability plans. Some public engagement strategies have been organized by local government staff, others have expended from \$25,000 to above \$150,000 on direct consulting services to develop and implement public engagement strategies. Successes from these cases include:

- Baltimore’s establishment of guiding principles facilitated community input and involvement from a broad range of stakeholders. Baltimore established three operating principles for the CSP planning process: (1) inclusion in all initiatives, (2) translation of jargon into language people would understand, and (3) engagement of all citizens – not just at policy or technical level, but also people on the streets, communities and in schools.
- Since embarking upon its original sustainability mission in 2005, the City of Dubuque has placed high importance on citizen input in sustainability planning. Their first plan, Sustainable Dubuque, was City Council-adopted, community-created, and citizen-led utilizing a city-wide task force made up of diverse local stakeholders and supported by city staff over the course of two years. In 2009, Dubuque 2.0 was initiated by the Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque and the Chamber of Commerce that further encouraged community input and sharing among individuals, businesses, schools and nonprofits through greater outreach efforts, including a strong online presence and a community-wide Dubuque 2.0 Sustainability Challenge. This grassroots approach in sustainability planning provided a

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.mindmixer.com/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.granicus.com/Customers/Case-Studies/City-of-Murfreesboro.aspx>

<sup>32</sup> See <http://nycbigapps.com/>

platform for the formation of invaluable partnerships and public buy-in that has increased the scope of the City’s work to include the creation of a replicable model. Through its current partnership with IBM, Dubuque continues to increase capacity for community engagement in planning incorporating “high-technology” components, such as online portals for citizens to monitor water use.

- Civic engagement is a core value of Arlington County. The County’s Community Energy Plan included a 2010/2011 task force, several energy town hall meetings, and multiple targeted meetings with the development community, businesses, and individuals interested in the effort.
- Using sub-grants from EECBG funding, the City of Atlanta worked with non-profit organizations that were aligned with some of the City’s initiatives to help jump start certain activities
- Nashville, Tennessee used an online citizen survey that generated more than 1,800 responses and held a series of five public workshops to identify close to 900 recommendations for a plan
- Onondaga County utilized a citizen survey to gather input as well as nine public workshops and a series of meetings in public parks to include non-traditional stakeholders
- San Antonio’s initial efforts were developed mostly with internal staff, but the subsequent process involved community forums with thousands of participants providing feedback and input
- Shelby County used a “digital congress” in a local auditorium to rank upwards of 400 plan recommendations and narrow them down to the final 150

## SECTION 9.0 POLICY APPROACHES OF OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Key findings were developed based on research or stakeholder interviews and meetings. Below are the key findings relevant to policy approaches that have been used by other local governments regarding the development and adoption of CSPs. Following the set of key findings is research and analysis that supports the findings.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Communication Tool.** A CSP presents the CharMeck jurisdictions with a chance to showcase past achievements, discuss current projects, and highlight future plans. There is a lot that has happened in the CharMeck region to support sustainability, and many residents are probably unaware of many of these efforts, or the disparate efforts are not discussed in one singular location. A CSP presents an opportunity to develop a new communication tool that will benefit residents, staff, and elected officials alike.

**Knit Together Existing Resources.** The City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and the CharMeck region have many existing efforts that address sustainability, including but not limited to a regional HUD planning grant (“Connect Project”); Quality of Life Study; Envision Charlotte plan; comprehensive plans of the towns in Mecklenburg County; Mecklenburg County’s Environmental Sustainability Plan, and Blueprint for a Healthier Generation, 2020; and the City of Charlotte’s Centers, Corridors and Wedges Growth Framework and Sustainable City Facilities Plan. A frequent comment heard during ICMA’s information-gathering processes was that a CSP could help “knit together” existing activities.

**Redundancy.** Staff in many of the CharMeck jurisdictions are already working on the Quality of Life Study and/or the regional CONNECT partnership. There is concern from staff that if a CSP is developed, there will be a redundancy of effort, and the result will be inefficient use of staff’s time, which will be to the detriment of existing projects and the CSP. Duplication of effort was also noted as a concern when interviewing other communities outside the CharMeck region.

**Shelf Document.** Both staff and external stakeholders expressed concern that a CSP may become too cumbersome and as a result, sit on the shelf rather than become operationalized. The CharMeck community would rather see a well-executed smaller effort than a full-scale effort that is comprehensive, but too burdensome to be meaningful.

**The Missing Piece.** As expressed during stakeholder interviews and confirmed with ICMA research, many cities of Charlotte’s size have developed or are currently in the process of developing a CSP. Concern was expressed about how Charlotte could be negatively impacted by not having a coordinated sustainability strategy or governing structure.

### Research and Analysis Discussion

Hundreds of local jurisdictions around the United States have developed sustainability websites, resolutions, strategies, and plans for action. Others have incorporated sustainability into existing documents such as their comprehensive plan or land use development strategies.

As a practical matter, few local governments are able to undertake a comprehensive review of everything they do and develop a new sustainability master plan as indicated by the statistics in **Table B**. Issues need to be prioritized, while understanding that each is only part of what makes a sustainable community. Communities need not start with a clean sheet of paper, but rather can build on existing work, taking a more integrated and longer view as different problems or opportunities are incrementally attacked. The “right” approach in almost all cases is one that focuses on important local priorities and captures the attention of a community in a way that results in outcomes that make a difference.

**Table B: Specific Actions Taken By Jurisdictions Related to Sustainability<sup>33</sup>**

Action	% Reporting Action
Adoption by the governing body of a resolution stating policy goals	28.7%
Adoption by the governing body of a plan with specific targets or benchmarks	18.5%
Establishment of a sustainability policy and/or plan by the chief executive	18.1%
Appointment of a citizens committee, commission or task force	26.7%
Provided a budget specifically for the sustainability effort	15.6%
Dedicated staff to the sustainability effort	26.8%

**Table C** below refines the data for several of the questions below based on population size and geographic region. As the data indicate, it is typically the larger communities that have developed more fully formed plans with performance measures.

**Table C: Adoption by the governing body of a plan with specific benchmarks<sup>34</sup>**

	Total # Reporting	# Responding to Question	% Reporting
Population	<b>2176</b>	<b>403</b>	<b>18.5%</b>
1,000,000+	13	9	69.2%
500,000 – 1,000,000	21	9	42.9%
250,000 – 499,999	32	11	34.4%
100,000 – 249,999	120	43	35.8%
50,000 – 99,999	196	60	30.6%
25,000 – 49,999	272	66	24.3%
10,000 – 24,999	556	92	16.5%

<sup>33</sup> ICMA Survey on Local Government Sustainability Policies and Programs

<sup>34</sup> ICMA Survey on Local Government Sustainability Policies and Programs, 2010

<b>5,000 – 9,999</b>	480	67	14%
<b>2,500 – 4,999</b>	483	46	9.5%
<b>Under 2,500</b>	3		
Geographic Region			
<b>Northeast</b>	382	69	18.1
<b>North Central</b>	716	95	13.3
<b>South</b>	625	119	19.0
<b>West</b>	453	110	24.3

El Paso’s sustainability planning process pays attention to the city’s location at a major border crossing with Mexico. For years, air quality in the Paso del Norte air shed has been rated poorly using public health metrics. However, this is obviously a bi-national issue; thus, one of the goals in El Paso’s plan is to work with its cross-border neighbor to reach acceptable attainment of air quality standards by 2019.<sup>35</sup>

Burnsville, Minnesota focused their sustainability plan around fourteen “best practice areas” ranging from environmentally preferable purchasing to land use and transportation to education among many others.<sup>36</sup>

- Atlanta’s major program and policy areas include air quality, community health and vitality, energy, education, jobs and competitiveness, land use, recycling and materials management, transportation and water management.
- Baltimore’s main focus areas are labeled by the city’s cleanliness, pollution prevention, resource conservation, transportation, education and awareness, and creating a green economy. As has been noted elsewhere, Baltimore is making a special effort to ensure that k-12 students are engaged and have recently created a food policy task force
- Onondaga County’s efforts include focus on transportation and land use, buildings and neighborhoods, rural communities and open space, water resources, inter-municipal planning, energy, livability and economic resiliency. As noted elsewhere, Onondaga County’s plan has several sections committed to preserving the small town way of life in the 35 or so small towns, villages and hamlets inside the county’s borders.

In 2008, Nashville-Davidson’s Mayor signed US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and created the Mayor’s Green Ribbon Committee on Environmental Sustainability comprised of 27 citizen leaders from business, government, education, and civic sectors who met monthly. For ten months, the committee engaged citizens, experts, and others from government to obtain input on a strategy for making Nashville the “greenest city in the southeast.” The Committee launched a website, which they initially used to obtain input from an environment survey that over 1,800 citizens responded to and expressed interest in getting involved. The web site announced committee meetings, summaries from sessions, and other background information. In November 2008, the Committee launched a series of five public workshops. Approximately 300 people attended, generating some 900 recommendations. The Committee utilized consultants in analyzing this information to develop 16 goals and 71 recommendations and categorized them as being “Quick Wins” or achievable in the “Mid-Range” or “Long-Range” future.<sup>37</sup> Nashville’s core areas include greenhouse gas emissions, education and outreach, energy and buildings, mobility, and natural resources protection.

<sup>35</sup> City of El Paso, 2009. *Livable City Sustainability Plan*.

<sup>36</sup> City of Burnsville, MN, 2009. *Sustainability Guide Plan*

<sup>37</sup> Nashville-Davidson, June 2009. *Together Making Nashville Green*.

The above examples differ, but are still relatively comprehensive. More modest approaches that can still be meaningful for communities include plans that begin with analysis that is as focused as an energy audit of the local government's buildings, the fuel efficiency of the cities fleet, an assessments of threats to the watershed, optimization of traffic signals, inventory of pedestrian access obstacles, or threats to economic opportunity from deteriorating neighborhoods, poor schools, or high teen pregnancy rates.

Some communities tend to focus on particular issues such as energy or disaster resiliency. Alachua County, Florida has adopted energy as both a sustainability and a resiliency issue and continues to work towards identification of a "more locally secure and lower cost energy future" by focusing on energy efficiency, transportation, and alternative energy sources.<sup>38</sup> Other communities have expressed similar desires and planning processes.

Arlington, Virginia started its sustainability efforts aggressively in 2007 with a goal to reduce energy use for county government operations (stated as an emissions reduction goal of 10% between 2000 and 2012). Arlington reports the following results:

*Overall, comparing the buildings we had in 2007 to those same buildings in 2009, our efficiency efforts saved nearly 3,000,000 kWh of electricity and over 20,000 therms of natural gas - even though the winter months were colder in 2009 than in 2007. These reductions saved the county nearly \$300,000 in avoided energy costs over the past two years. Altogether, the energy intensity of these buildings decreased by nearly 7% between 2007 and 2009.*

Currently, Arlington is completing a massive community engagement process to establish energy goals and strategies for the entire County. This project will ultimately result in an energy plan that addresses energy consumption in homes, shops, offices, public buildings and other institutions – and offer "strategies to enhance Arlington's economic competitiveness, ensure reliable and affordable energy supplies, and demonstrate the County's long-term commitment to environmental responsibility."<sup>39</sup>

During the evening of May 4, 2007 a massive tornado ripped into Greensburg, Kansas, killing several residents and destroying or severely damaging 90% of the communities building stock and structures. As a farming community, Greensburg had been losing population due to a struggling agricultural based economy. The tragedy offered the town an opportunity to re-imagine the future. A little more than a year after the tornado disaster, the town published the *Greensburg Sustainable Comprehensive Plan*.<sup>40</sup> An entire chapter of the plan is devoted to hazard mitigation. The plan also noted that as part of the recovery effort, the City of Greensburg should become storm ready by participating in a voluntary program run by the National Weather Service. The program is designed to prepare communities for severe weather through advanced planning, education and awareness by the local community's residents.

Additionally, Greensburg took the opportunity to evaluate new approaches for diversifying economic activity in the community. Economic disruptions are often slow moving as factories close, jobs go away, or new technologies take over; however they can be as sudden as the 2008 financial crisis or the EF-5 tornado in Greensburg. As a part of its planning process the community focused on new opportunities including ways to

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<sup>38</sup> Alachua County only makes many documents available through an online reader. The Report of the Energy Conservation Strategies Commission can be found online through the following link:

<http://www.alachuacounty.us/Depts/Manager/Sustainability/Pages/ECSC.aspx>

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.arlingtonva.us/portals/topics/Climate.aspx>

<sup>40</sup> City of Greensburg. 2008. Greensburg Sustainable Comprehensive Plan.

tap the region's proven wind energy potential as well as creating a niche market in environmental tourism as the community comes back with a greener focus.

The City of Keene, New Hampshire was an early signatory to the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign, which was organized by ICLEI. This effort was orchestrated because of changes attributed to a changing climate:

*Despite the City's commitment to mitigation, the impacts associated with a changing climate are already being felt in Keene. From more frequent and severe flooding to changes in annual snowfall amounts, to the infestation of non-native plant and animal species, to the increase in total number of high heat index days and more numerous poor air quality days, the City has come to recognize that these changes are ultimately impacting the community's built, natural and social environments.<sup>41</sup>*

Working with ICLEI during 2006 and 2007, Keene began to assess the community's vulnerabilities and approaches to make the region more resilient to climatic and meteorological changes.

## SECTION 10.0 FINDING RESOURCES FOR SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES, PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

Key findings were developed based on research or stakeholder interviews and meetings. Below are the key findings relevant to finding resources for sustainability strategies, plans and activities. Following the set of key findings is research and analysis that supports the findings.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Staffing Strategies for Success.** In many communities, sustainability offices are located within the office of the City Manager (e.g. Raleigh, Dubuque) or the elected executive office (Mayor's Office), such as in San Antonio, Atlanta and Baltimore. According to ICMA research, the average number of FTEs devoted to a community's sustainability effort is approximately 1.9 per jurisdiction.<sup>42</sup> This finding was also evident in the case studies prepared for this report, where most offices had one or two staff responsible for managing sustainability initiatives.

**Paying for Staff.** In a study of 38 local governments, it was found that sustainability staff and operations are funded primarily through the General Fund (55%), then through special fees and rebates (37%), followed by the EECBG grant specifically (29%) foundation grants or partnerships (24%), and cost savings (16%).<sup>43</sup> In Dubuque, Iowa, an AmeriCorps member supports the sustainability efforts of the community in addition to a local government-funded sustainability coordinator. The communities of Raleigh, Atlanta, Asheville, and DeKalb County used EECBG funding to hire sustainability managers and/or implement sustainability initiatives. A community foundation in Baltimore helps fund positions that support the city's efforts around sustainability.

**Stimulating Sustainability.** It's clear that EECBG funds were a big boon to local governments and provided an inflow of cash to enable many to create new planning and implementation activities around sustainability and energy usage. As many of those grant programs start to end, it is too early to tell how many communities, and with what financial strategies and approaches, will continue their sustainability efforts at the accelerated pace in the years after EECBG funding. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many are trying to identify financing and staffing strategies to continue the efforts kick started by EECBG and other federal sources.

<sup>41</sup> City of Keene, New Hampshire, 2007. *Keene, New Hampshire, Adapting to Climate Change: Planning a Climate Resilient Community.*

<sup>42</sup> ICMA Survey on Local Government Sustainability Policies and Programs, 2010

<sup>43</sup> [http://www.icleiusa.org/library/documents/ICLEI\\_Sustainability\\_Funding\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.icleiusa.org/library/documents/ICLEI_Sustainability_Funding_Fact_Sheet.pdf)

**Show me the Money.** CSPs can provide access to new grant funds, and a means to bring together the public, private, and non-profit sectors, and the community at-large to find common areas of interest that support a more sustainable region. Many communities have found that implementing new sustainability initiatives can result in cost-savings with short payback periods. Some initiatives, like those that focus on behavior change, require little to no upfront cost.

**Lack of resources.** A challenge that exists for many local governments and that was also mentioned by staff from CharMeck jurisdictions is a concern that a lack of resources (time and money) could present a challenge to the successful completion and implementation of a CSP.

### Research and Analysis Discussion

Budgets are at the forefront of local government decision-making as the impacts from the Great Recession continue to affect the ability of jurisdictions to deliver services. According to ICMA survey data a little more than one in four local governments have provided financial and human resources specifically for their sustainability efforts. **Table E** below provides a break down by population size and geographic region. As the table indicates, local governments often approached their sustainability effort without adding a budget and were more likely to assign staff without a budget to a sustainability effort.

**Table D: Number of Local Governments Providing Budgets for Sustainability Activities<sup>44</sup>**

	Total # Reporting	Provided a budget specifically for the sustainability effort		Dedicated staff to the sustainability effort	
		# Responding	% Reporting	# Responding	% Reporting
Population	2176	582	26.7%	583	26.8%
1,000,000+	13	7	53.8%	12	92.3
500,000 – 1,000,000	21	8	38.1%	12	57.1
250,000 – 499,999	32	9	28.1	23	71.9
100,000 – 249,999	120	38	31.7	64	53.3
50,000 – 99,999	196	46	23.5	89	45.4
25,000 – 49,999	272	56	20.6	96	35.3
10,000 – 24,999	556	75	13.5	137	24.6
5,000 – 9,999	480	53	11	87	18.1
2,500 – 4,999	483	45	9.3	63	13.0
Under 2,500	3	2	66.7		
Geographic Region					
Northeast	382	44	11.5	93	24.3
North Central	716	98	13.7	152	21.2
South	625	90	14.4	156	25.0
West	453	107	23.6	182	40.2

<sup>44</sup> ICMA Survey on Local Government Sustainability Policies and Programs, 2010



In 2011, ICLEI conducted a study of how 38 governments were funding their sustainability efforts and found a mixture of sources including General Funds (55%), special fees or rebates (37%), foundation grants or partnerships (24%), EECBG or other ARRA funds (29%) and cost savings (16%).

For purposes of this project, ICMA has disseminated an electronic survey to several dozen communities that have previously responded to ICMA's national survey on local government sustainability policies. Some initial findings from this survey include:

- Most communities pegged the direct costs of developing their sustainability plan at under \$100,000 exclusive of staff time spent on leading the effort.
- Most indicated that General Funds were used for the planning effort followed in order by federal grants, state grants, community foundations, national foundations and private sector sponsorship

The case study research developed as part of this project revealed a diverse mix of sources being used to fund sustainability planning activities.

- Asheville used \$25,000 from the City Manager's discretionary budget and some external funding through the chose consultant to develop their plan
- Arlington County, Virginia is developing a community energy plan and has appropriated \$280,000 for the effort
- DeKalb County, Georgia used EECBG funds to fund the development of their sustainability plan

The case study research also revealed some interesting examples, partnerships and approaches for funding and staffing the implementation of sustainability activities.

- The City of Atlanta budgeted approximately \$750,000 in FY 2013 to fund staff and operating expenses. Additionally the City utilized EECBG funds and is exploring a revolving loan fund as a source of revenue. The Mayor's Office of Sustainability currently has 6 FTEs.
- Baltimore's sustainability efforts are funded through a combination of General Funds and leveraged dollars from organizations such as the local community foundation which has established several funds to facilitate sustainability initiatives. Like other communities, Baltimore also looks to secure federal and other funding when the right opportunity is available from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency or other sources.
- Dubuque, Iowa has one full-time sustainability coordinator that spends half of her time working on projects internal to the local government and the rest is spent on working on community issues. The City has also secured an AmeriCorps VISTA to support outreach and community engagement. The City has allocated approximately \$100,000 annually in General Funds but also funds activities through aggressive grant writing activities.
- Onondaga has merged their budgetary process and staffing plan by purposefully not designating a specific office, FTE, or budget to sustainability in order to distribute responsibility across departments. The county's efforts are led by a Sustainability Advisory Committee made up of representatives from all county departments. The county did identify approximately \$225,000 in stimulus funds, local planning funds and in-kind staff time to develop their emerging sustainability plan.

## SECTION 11.0 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Key findings were developed based on research or stakeholder interviews and meetings. Below are the key findings relevant to performance measurement and management. Following the key findings is research and analysis that supports the findings.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Goal Setting and Performance Measurement Matters.** ICMA research suggests that the adoption of a specific sustainability resolution or other policy action with specific goals and targets can lead to expanded actions by the jurisdiction. A CharMeck community CSP would benefit from the existing quantitative measures and approaches undertaken by the Quality of Life data, because a potential performance measurement system is already in place in the community.

**Reporting is Essential.** Communities that have implemented sustainability plans have worked hard to develop viable performance measurement and management strategies as essential elements of implementing their sustainability strategies. Moreover, many have also developed reporting mechanisms including annual reports, web sites and other communication tools to showcase success stories as well as where more work is needed.

### *Research and Analysis Discussion*

Many communities use performance measurement and management strategies and tools to better understand the effectiveness of their policies, programs and service delivery. Approaches vary from comparative analysis on relatively common service delivery areas across multiple local governments to the use of citizen surveys to analyze perceptions by the community to detail-rich quality of life and community-scale indicator systems measuring outcomes across a wide array of variables. In many places, multiple techniques are being applied in order to paint a rich portrait of where things are going well and where new efforts may be needed to bring about positive changes.

In some communities, sustainability plans have been coupled with indicators to measure the outputs and impacts of activities. Beginning in the mid-1990s, large and small communities began to measure the impacts of their actions as part of their sustainability efforts.<sup>45</sup> The Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project has been measuring sustainability impacts since 1999, covering areas such as public safety, education and children, social equity, community engagement, economy variables, environmental challenges, health, and land use and mobility. The indicators cover a five county region in and around Austin, Texas. The group's 2009 report indicated that

1. Race and ethnicity continued to have a profound impact on how Central Texans perceive issues in their region
2. The connections between indicators continue to grow for example the connections between crime patterns and health, family income and educational attainment
3. Environmental issues require more immediate action, without which the quality of life in the region will slowly be undermined
4. More people in the measured region are getting engaged because, seemingly, they value where they live and indicate that they are ready to do more to ensure its success and quality of life<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Hart, Maureen. 2007. *Guide to Sustainable Community Indicators*. Sustainable Measures, West Hartford, CT.

<sup>46</sup> 2009. Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project, 2009 Indicators Report. [www.centex-indicators.org](http://www.centex-indicators.org)

Researchers often point to early work done in Minnesota on sustainability indicators led by the state’s planning agency. The City of Minneapolis has been publishing the Living Well annual report since the mid-2000s. This annual report benchmarks the City’s activities and progress in meeting goals and targets across several metric areas as illustrated in **Table E** below.

**Table E: Minneapolis Living Well Goals and Indicators.**<sup>47</sup>

Greenprint	Vital Community	Healthy Life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Climate Change</li> <li>• Renewable Energy</li> <li>• Air Quality</li> <li>• Waste Reduction and Recycling</li> <li>• Biking</li> <li>• Downtown Transportation Alternatives</li> <li>• Airport Noise</li> <li>• Tree Canopy</li> <li>• Stormwater</li> <li>• Healthy Lakes</li> <li>• Green Jobs</li> <li>• Local Food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable Housing</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Brownfield Sites</li> <li>• Violent Crimes</li> <li>• Community Engagement</li> <li>• Arts and the Economy</li> <li>• Graduation Rate</li> <li>• Employment and Poverty</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy Infants</li> <li>• Teen Pregnancy</li> <li>• Sexually Transmitted Disease</li> <li>• Healthy Weight</li> <li>• Asthma</li> <li>• Lead Poisoning</li> </ul>

The report presents a targeted goal as “improving air quality” and provides targets and dates. For each measurable goal the report provides a brief paragraph analyzing trends and then notes City and community actions since the last report to highlight efforts underway and the resulting outcomes.<sup>48</sup>

In 2009, the Public Technology Institute surveyed a relatively limited number of local governments about their sustainability indicators and performance measurement approaches and found that “a majority of respondents believe that there are no useful and available cross-cutting sustainability tools on the market that can help them measure their progress across multiple areas.”<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, the report noted that many communities in the survey pool tended to build their own tailored spreadsheets to see how they are doing in areas that they deemed to be priorities.

The STAR Community Index<sup>50</sup> is a national, consensus-based framework for gauging the sustainability and livability of U.S. communities. STAR functions as a planning and measurement system that local governments can use to assess their sustainability efforts and measure actions across multiple areas that correspond to the triple bottom line. STAR has the following features:

- A framework for sustainability that covers the social, economic and environmental dimensions of community;
- A rating system that drives continuous improvement and fosters competition; and

*Version 1.0 of the STAR Communities Index and Ratings system is now available and information can be accessed at [starcommunities.org](http://starcommunities.org)*

<sup>47</sup> City of Minneapolis, 2010. Minneapolis Living Well Sustainability Report. [www.ci.sustainability.mn.us/sustainability](http://www.ci.sustainability.mn.us/sustainability)

<sup>48</sup> City of Minneapolis, 2010. Minneapolis Living Well 2010 Sustainability Report. [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability)

<sup>49</sup> Public Technology Institute, 2009. *Local Government Sustainability Indicators: 2009 National Survey Summary Report*. Washington, DC

<sup>50</sup> <http://www.starcommunities.org/>

- An online system that gathers, organizes, analyzes, and presents information required to meet sustainability goals.

ICMA’s survey on local government sustainability policies and programs provides some evidence of how widespread quality of life indicators and reporting are as part of localities sustainability initiatives. As evidenced below, jurisdictions in the southern quadrant of the United States tended to measure quality of life indicators more so than other regions outside of the western states.

**Table F: Number of Communities Reporting on Quality of Life Indicators<sup>51</sup>**

Communities that report on quality of life indicators such as education, cultural diversity, and social well-being

Population	Total # Reporting (2176)	# Responding to Question (325)	% Reporting (14.9%)
1,000,000+	13	7	53.8%
500,000 – 1,000,000	21	10	47.6%
250,000 – 499,999	32	15	46.9%
100,000 – 249,999	120	42	35.0%
50,000 – 99,999	196	54	27.6%
25,000 – 49,999	272	57	21.0%
10,000 – 24,999	556	71	12.8%
5,000 – 9,999	480	41	8.5%
2,500 – 4,999	483	28	5.8%
Under 2,500	3		
Geographic Region			
Northeast	382	36	9.4%
North Central	716	87	12.2%
South	625	98	15.7%
West	453	104	23.0%

Not presented above, but evident in the same ICMA statistical data sets (not presented because of length), communities located in south Atlantic states (Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia) were more likely to measure quality of life than other regions of the United States outside of the Pacific and mountain west.<sup>52</sup>

Some of the performance measures adopted by the communities profiled for this study include the following:

- Asheville is considering using the STAR Community Index; however they are currently using data on the community’s carbon footprint and greenhouse gas emissions, natural gas consumption, street lighting, employee commuting and other energy uses.
- Similarly, Arlington is focused more on energy measures such as vehicle miles travelled (VMT), building energy efficiency using EPA’s Portfolio Manager software system, fuel use and greenhouse gas

<sup>51</sup> ICMA Survey on Local Government Policies and Programs

<sup>52</sup> ICMA Survey on Local Government Policies and Programs

emissions. Other potential measures include performance labeling improving community literacy on energy issues, and promoting incentives to improve energy efficiency.

- Some of the measures from Atlanta’s old plan include a reduction, reuse or recycling of 30% of the city’s residential waste, a minimum of 10 acres of green space for every 1,000 residents, and a City fleet at least 15% of which is made up of alternatively fueled vehicles. In its revised plan there is a much more aggressive proposed goal of 90% diversion of MSW from landfills through recycling, composting, and other diversion tactics.
- The City of Baltimore is working with a local university to develop and collect measures and establish neighborhood scale indicators, building from what the city concluded was an initially weak performance management structure.
- In establishing performance measures, the City of Dubuque, Iowa collaborated with the University of Iowa School of Urban and Regional Planning last academic year. Dubuque has been working to develop a set of 60 specific measurements to benchmark and track progress of initiatives under the plan’s 11 principles. Some of the proposed measures include GDP growth, net job growth, household energy use, renewable energy use among others.
- The City and County of Durham suggested that some of their key measures included VMT, stream water quality, acres of open space, waste diverted and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Nashville’s plan includes 71 recommendations and 16 goals that are tied to performance measures and indicators including reducing energy consumption by 20% by 2020; meet or outperform air quality standards and remove local streams and rivers from impaired bodies of water lists.
- Onondaga County’s performance metrics zeroed in on reducing the amount of farmland and open space lost to development, getting more households closer to community assets such as parks, libraries, schools and grocery stores, and creating more walkable neighborhoods.
- Not currently in use because the software company went bankrupt, Palo Alto used an online tool that provided information on the city’s efforts around sustainability and in a highly visible way provided residents with easy access to performance measures across a range of variables and indicators. The city has a goal of being a carbon neutral community and to dramatically increase the amount of renewable energy used in the jurisdiction.
- Sarasota County has utilized various designation processes for their sustainability efforts including ISO 14000 for environmental management systems, Florida Green Building Coalition and Florida Green Local Government certifications.

Charlotte and Mecklenburg County communities have been early adopters of measurement innovations in local government management for decades, as evidenced by implementation of a Balanced Scorecard approach linking strategy with resource and the longitudinal Quality of Life study which dates back to the early 1990s. Importantly, the Quality of Life reporting has continued to evolve as new areas of analysis have been deemed a priority. In 2010, new metrics focused on business corridors and the pending 2012 Quality of Life measures were expanded to include other topics including environmental conditions.

## **SECTION 12.0 CONCLUSION**

Through the process of developing this feasibility study, ICMA gathered a significant amount of data and stakeholder feedback relevant to sustainability on the national level and to CharMeck specifically. The methods used to conduct this research and a description of the various topics that were analyzed are outlined in Part B and the Appendix of this document. Discoveries and conclusions regarding what ICMA learned are described in Part A.

Conclusions regarding this feasibility study are as follows. First, a coordinated sustainability effort is a viable project. There are many scenarios that could be considered, and these are outlined in Section 4. Second, based on ICMA's research, the recommended scenario is to develop a common sustainability vision without proscribing how the participating jurisdictions will get there. The next step is to use that vision as the paradigm from which to build upon the Quality of Life (QOL) Study. Using the robust data sets included in the QOL Study as a starting point, participating jurisdictions can select three to five indicators on which to focus their efforts over the coming year.

The benefit of moving forward with this scenario is that it allows the Mecklenburg County jurisdictions to agree to a common visionary framework. Through this process, there may be other areas that arise where greater collaboration and coordination would benefit the parties involved. Additionally, local government staff and external stakeholders are seeking a means to bring together disparate documents and programs that have a common end-goal. By building on the QOL Study, the jurisdictions will create actionable goals and a plan for reaching those goals associated with three to five of the study indicators. Lastly, by building from a process that the community already understands and supports, the CharMeck jurisdictions will avoid unnecessary redundancy, and add additional usefulness to the QOL data sets, which could be examined at both a neighborhood level, a jurisdiction level, and countywide.

Challenges of not moving forward with a scenario include opportunity costs associated with collaborations that were never pursued. Additionally, many sustainability issues (e.g. air quality, water quality and quantity, transportation) are not bound by jurisdictional divisions, and without working together, it will be challenging for the CharMeck community to make real headway to address these issues. There may also be a sense from the community that the CharMeck jurisdictions are out of touch, namely because many cities that are Charlotte's size have a sustainability strategy, and because there is a shared sense in the community that the CharMeck communities would benefit from a collaborative process.

As stated throughout this study, CharMeck has a number of documents and resources that support a sustainable CharMeck. Local government staff is highly knowledgeable about sustainability, and there are a number of community groups also working in support of sustainability. While these paper and human resources are beneficial on a stand-alone basis, there is currently a lost opportunity to bring them together, take inventory, and achieve common goals. No matter which scenario is chosen, the pieces are already there, it's simply a matter of deciding how to pull the puzzle together.