

# STEAM

The monthly newsletter of the Green Lake Area Sustainability Team\*

For June, 2012

Compiled by Jason Kauffeld, Green Lake County UWEX

An EEO/Affirmative Action employer, UWEX provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements. Requests for reasonable accommodations for disabilities or limitations should be made prior to the date of the program or activity for which it is needed. Please do so as early as possible prior to the program or activity so that proper arrangements can be made. Requests are kept confidential.

## TOP STORIES / RECOMMENDED SITES

[Documentary covering one day in every country on Earth.](#)

[Values and the Next Generation, from the Solutions Journal.](#)

**Choosing Ignorance is Stupid.** The U.S. was once a world leader in collecting planning statistics. Now, other countries and international organizations [are taking the lead.](#)

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

[EPA / Government Grants](#)

[Funding Opportunities on the Smartgrowth.org website](#)

## EDUCATION/ HOW TO / TRAINING

[The American Institute of Architects Application Packet for the 2013 SDAT Program](#)

Since its inception in 2005, the SDAT program has assisted over 60 communities with long-term sustainability plans addressing a range of local issues. The SDAT is an innovative program that brings together multidisciplinary teams of professionals to work

with community stakeholders and decision-makers through an intensive planning process. The mission is to provide technical assistance and process expertise to help communities develop a vision and framework for a sustainable future.

[The latest edition of the Land Use Tracker newsletter is now available.](#) Stories on:

- Tracking the Rate of Farmland Loss in Wisconsin Counties
- Isolated Forest Patches Lose Species, Diversity
- The Economic Impact of Agriculture in Wisconsin Counties
- The Economic Impact of Organic Agriculture in Wisconsin
- New Plan Commission Handbook Available
- Calendar of Events

## BUILDINGS

[List of Wisconsin's LEED certified buildings.](#)

Green Lake County Justice Center  
LEED-NC: Silver  
Building Type: Government  
Architect: Potter Lawson, Inc.  
Contractor: The Samuels Group



## BUSINESS and EMPLOYMENT

[Cutting-edge: Timbergreen Farm's focus on maintaining healthy forests helps the company attract prized bucks.](#) The Lorax would have loved Jim Birkemeier. Of course, Dr. Seuss' famous, fuzzy-headed noodle is likely not the business community's favorite personality, but his message of sustainability is one that Birkemeier, a successful businessman by any measure, has taken to heart.

[UW System launches 5-campus water technology initiative](#), Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, June 11. If water is the new oil, having an abundance of both water and college-educated water technology professionals statewide could give Wisconsin a competitive edge in attracting new companies that require expertise in managing what could be the 21st century's No. 1 commodity.

**WHITEWATER - The City of Whitewater is about to get a bit greener.** Organic-waste plant to create 70 jobs: Green Energy Whitewater bound, By Chris Welch, Union staff writer

The Whitewater Common Council has finalized a preliminary development agreement with Green Energy Holdings Inc. (GEH) to build an organic-waste energy facility that is expected to bring about 70 jobs to the city.

Plans call for the city to sell property adjacent to its wastewater treatment plant to GEH for \$525,000. GEH then will build a 66,000-square-foot facility to house a Renewable Natural Gas (RNG) anaerobic digester system, along with another 33,000-square-foot lawncare/landscaping building, greenhouse and associated facilities.

In short, the company will collect and convert organic waste products - primarily food waste, but also such things as grass clippings and leaves - into methane, which then can be converted into liquid natural gas, further refined to compressed natural gas or burned to produce electricity for either on-site consumption or on the power grid.

The total estimated investment by GEH for the project is about \$30 million, according to City Manager Kevin Brunner.

The city agreed to pay for some improvements, such as extending the water utility to the new facility, which will be paid for through funds from Tax Incremental Finance District No. 8. The city also is providing a \$175,000 incentive grant to the company.

The city's total cost through the TIF district and grant is about \$200,000, Brunner said.

"In terms of jobs and the tax base, this is pretty significant; I think this is a pretty big deal," he said. "The council formally approved a preliminary development agreement, and that is subject to some additional agreements. But basically, GEH is planning about a \$30 million investment, and they also will guarantee about \$10 million in property value for property tax purposes. If it would be less than \$10 million, they would make a payment in lieu of taxes for the difference."

He said some of the dry-waste byproducts of GEH's process include "pellets" that can be used for animal dry-bedding, peat or a small animal feed, or be burned as a heating fuel-source, much like woodchips. A liquid byproduct can be used as fertilizer.

"We also will be building a worm farm to use some of that dry-waste product," Likas said. "One of the reasons for the worm farms is that their droppings are rich in nutrients, and

when applied to vegetables that we will be selling in the greenhouse, it makes a natural product that qualifies as organic."

Brunner noted that worm farms are about a \$22 billion industry nationally.

## ENERGY

[Bringing down the cost of fuel cells](#), R&D Magazine, June 22. Engineers at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) have identified a catalyst that provides the same level of efficiency in microbial fuel cells (MFCs) as the currently used platinum catalyst, but at 5% of the cost...

[Navy funds development of tool to model biofuel performance](#), Design News, June 25. The Office of Naval Research has given researchers at the University of Wisconsin \$2 million to create a tool that can model the performance of various biofuels as part of the military's ongoing interest in using alternative energy sources to reduce dependency on traditional fossil fuels...

**Vintage neon light has been burning since 1935.** Workers renovating an old building in Los Angeles found a neon light that has been burning for 77 years. Andrew Meieran, owner of Clifton's Cafeteria, says he was in the building's basement with a member of his construction crew when "I thought I caught a glimpse of a little light coming through the wall." Further inspection revealed a vintage neon tube first activated in 1935, and boarded over in 1949. Meieran estimates that the light has burned about \$17,000 worth of electricity over the decades. From The Week magazine, June 8, 2012. P. 12

## ENVIRONMENT

[Green Bay Quantifies Energy, Environmental Benefits of Trees.](#) A recent analysis in the Green Bay area found that public trees provide more than \$6.0 million in annual benefits to local communities. Savings included \$1.8 million per year from summer cooling and winter heating, \$1.8 million in stormwater management, and \$2.0 million in increases in local property values.

## FOOD

[Walking the Talk of Food Systems at a Small Land Grant University: Overcoming Process Barriers to a Transdisciplinary Approach](#)

## RECYCLING

[Recycling's Silver Lining. Governing.](#) A clear majority -- 83 percent -- of Wisconsin residents is happy with the state's pioneering 1989 law that mandates city and county recycling programs.

This week, the Learning Store is featuring some new publications about [disposing of hazardous wastes used in the home](#) (e.g., pesticides, automotive products, home improvement products). I bet Bo, Luke, or Uncle Jesse couldn't help you with that.

## SUSTAINABILITY

[Campus Connection: Earth nearing critical 'tipping point' due to human influence?](#), Capital Times, June 14.

## TRANSPORTATION

[Rural Areas Increasingly Dependent on Mass Transit.](#) A new study by Reconnecting America found that 40 percent of rural populations—including senior citizens, the disabled, and low-income individuals—are dependent on mass transit for their daily activities. The study explored how smaller cities, towns, and rural places are integrating transit to serve this transit-dependent population. The study highlights smaller cities and rural places where transit investments are helping to set the stage for a robust future.

[Spring 2012 Safe Routes to Schools Reporter](#)

To view the full Cheese Country Trail study results, go to <http://green.uwex.edu/files/2010/11/2012-Cheese-Country-Trail-Survey-Results.pdf>