

ECO² COMMISSION 2005-2006 PROGRESS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared by ECO² Commissioners RoxAnne Miller, Chair, Sandra Shaw, Vice-Chair, Trudy Rice, John Pendleton, Rex Buchanan, Mark Gonzales, Larry McElwain and Jim Roberts for presentation to the Douglas County Commission on June 19, 2006 and the Lawrence City Commission on June 20, 2006.

The primary purposes of this third annual report are (1) to review the ECO² Commission's progress in developing a long-term plan for concurrent business/industrial park development and open space preservation; and, (2) to have discussions with the City and County Commissions regarding future ECO² goals and activities.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary goal this past year was to complete the initial charge to the ECO² Commission to develop a plan regarding concurrent business/industrial park development and open space preservation as directed by the Joint Resolution of the City of Lawrence and Douglas County Commissions which established the ECO² Commission. The achievement of this goal required (1) a complete draft of the long-term plan, including maps, in a concise and readily understandable form; (2) a public education and outreach program designed to explain the plan and its benefits to the people of the Lawrence - Douglas County community; and, (3) the identification of public funding mechanisms that could be utilized by the governing bodies to fund the plan.

A second goal was to cooperate with the City and County Commissions in a demonstration project involving both industrial/business park development and open space preservation that would serve short-term needs in these areas for the next five to seven years.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The ECO² Commission did complete a draft of the plan. Several work groups were essential in the achievement of this goal. Each work group assumed responsibility for one of the several components of the plan. The work groups included diverse representation from the citizens of Douglas County. Over 50 people representing nearly two dozen entities participated in one or more work groups. The work groups were fundamental to the consensus building necessary to complete the plan draft and insure its success.

The support of other organizations and the resources provided by the City and County Commissions were also essential to the completion of the draft of the plan.

The completed plan includes (1) a process for identifying, evaluating and prioritizing prospective projects for business/industrial park development; (2) a process for identifying, evaluating and prioritizing prospective projects for open space preservation; (3) a process for the implementation of these programs which includes a funding strategy to assure equal investment of public funds in industrial parks and open space; (4) a process for informing the citizens of Douglas County about the plan and its benefits to the community; (5) a review of funding options that could be considered by the City and County Commissions for funding the plan; and, (6) proposed bylaws for the internal organization and operation of the ECO² Commission.

The plan was edited by a professional editor on a volunteer basis to optimize its conciseness and clarity of presentation.

The ECO² Commission did cooperate with the City and County Commissions and the Economic Development Board regarding a short-term proposal for industrial/business park development and open space preservation. The models developed by the industrial work group and the open space work group for identifying, evaluating and prioritizing prospective proposals were made available. A selection of prospective open space projects which already have been identified as having high priority and active advocates was also presented.

FUTURE GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

The implementation of the public education and outreach program, the finalization of the ECO² Long Term Program for Economic Development and Open Space Preservation, and, the presentation of that completed long term plan are the primary goals of the ECO² Commission in 2006-2007.

The plan of activities for the public education and outreach 2006-2007 goals and the time line for their completion is outlined below. During this process, citizens will have access to the plan through the libraries throughout the county as well as other locations, electronically and on a web page.

- August-September meet with key stakeholders to explain the ECO² concept and its benefits to our community and answer questions about the plan.
- September-November hold public informational meetings in Baldwin, Eudora, Lawrence and Lecompton to present the plan and address questions.
- October-December make the offer to deliver a brief program to service clubs and other organizations and the benefits to our community.
- January-February complete minor revisions to plan.
- March present final plan to the Douglas County and City of Lawrence Commissions.

The ECO² Commission is also committed to continued cooperation with the City and County Commissions and the Economic Development Board in the development of the short-term proposal.

RoxAnne Miller will be retiring as Chair after two very distinguished years of service in that position. Sandra Shaw will assume the position of Chair and Trudy Rice will assume the position of Vice Chair.

Jim Roberts and Mark Gonzalez will be retiring from the ECO² Commission as soon as their replacements have been appointed. Jim and Mark both served for several years on the original ECO² Committee before serving three years on the ECO² Commission.

The ECO² Commission is having conversation with several individuals regarding their current and/or future interest in serving on the ECO² Commission. The ECO² Commission will present recommendations to the City and County Commissions in the near future.