**Environmental Charter – Submitted via email by Amy Bartucci, Founder of Go Green Park Ridge**

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Go Green Park Ridge (GGPR) aims to raise environmental awareness in Park Ridge and to inspire people and organizations to live and operate more sustainably in order to make Park Ridge a cleaner, healthier place to live. In just a few years GGPR has grown to nearly 20 active collaborating members and hundreds of e-news recipients. We partner with many organizations in the surrounding area, including the Park Ridge Chamber of Commerce, Park Ridge Garden Club, Park Ridge Library, Park Ridge Park District and Park Ridge Farmers Market. GGPR has become a growing community voice that seeks avenues to work productively with the Park Ridge City Council to advance initiatives that address environmental concerns, meet our mutual goals, and benefit our beautiful community.

**Where do we go from here?**

Other towns have hired staff and developed well-defined plans to address these issues. These plans are called a variety of things, including Sustainability Plans or Climate Change Plans. The attached**Request for Resilience,** read during public comment on January 26, 2015, mentions that Park Ridge could put a Sustainability/Livability Plan in place.   Plans like these are intended to shape the future development of a town by addressing current community, governmental and development related practices, making them more environmentally sustainable and resilient in the face of a changing climate.

Implementing such plans can also create economic benefits and savings by lowering energy, water, transportation, and materials costs for the city, businesses, and citizens. Completing these plans would also nurture attractive, vibrant downtown areas that attract businesses, visitors, and residents.

**Methods for working together more productively include:**

* Forming a ***Sustainability Task Force or Commission*** to guide the development of a plan as requested in the **Request for Resilience**
* ***Designate a group of key city staff*** (a sustainability or green team) whom GGPR can communicate and work with on sustainability issues
* ***Conduct a survey*** via the public process to gauge environmental interests and concerns in Park Ridge
* Partner with the Chamber of Commerce and GGPR to ***hold a Green Fair*.** Businesses and organizations that provide green products and services can be given the opportunity to help the community by promoting sustainable and green living.

Topics to be addressed by the above could include, but are not limited to:

**Residents can be encouraged to be "Rain Ready" on their properties** – Park Ridge could implement more of the recommendations proposed by the Flood Control Task Force. Has/could the city hold educational workshops for residents to become more Rain Ready?  Does the city enforce the code that all downspouts and sump pump outlet pipes be disconnected from the sewers?  What green infrastructure and beneficial native landscaping is the city encouraging in order to better absorb the precipitation from heavy storms?   Wouldn't promoting a rain ready approach in our town improve our livability and reduce economic and emotional damage? Addressing our flooding problem is most certainly a strong mutual interest, and we can better work together on it.

**Recycling and Waste Reduction** - The City responded to GGPR when the request was made for more visible outdoor recycling to occur in uptown business area(s). Are there plans in place for more receptacles to be added around town? Are our local businesses able to recycle effectively?  Are residents being encouraged to maximize the amount they recycle, which would save the city money via our waste hauling contract and put less into our landfills?

**Encouraging Energy Efficiency by Businesses, Residents, and in City Operations** - Energy efficiency is the “low-hanging fruit” of sustainability. Illinois has great energy efficiency programs, operated through the state and the utilities. We pay for them via a charge added on to our bills; let’s make use of them and all save some money.  From there, we could increase the use of renewable energy and combined heat and power (cogeneration) where it makes sense.

**Reduction of Pollutants in Public Spaces** - Many towns have an effort in place to markedly reduce pesticide use at the community and neighborhood level - Park Ridge could 1) adopt policies that govern pesticide reduction on town-owned land 2) assess the use of pesticides on all public and private school properties to balance aesthetics and the safety of our children and educators, and 3) educate the public about alternatives to pesticides.  What does the City currently do to reduce exposure to these chemicals, some of which are carcinogens and/or endocrine disruptors, and harmful stormwater runoff in our town?

**Residents can take better part in Active Transportation** - Is Park Ridge pedestrian and bike friendly? Can it strive to be even more pedestrian and bike friendly to improve safety, realize health benefits in adults and children, and reduce air pollutants? What can we do to make Park Ridge streets and sidewalks more safe and welcoming and to help improve our sense of community? The City Council can better support transportation that encourages and promotes safety, physical activity, health, recreation, social interaction, equity, environmental stewardship and resource conservation.

All of the above could improve quality of life and the local economy and make Park Ridge an even MORE Wonderful Place! **We request that the Council consider the above and, in particular, pursue one or more of the above options for working together productively.**