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## **Fairfield Working For Sustainability**

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**FAIRFIELD, IA (WIUM)** - There are plenty of ways to live a more sustainable life. You can walk or bike to work, grow a backyard garden, or add insulation or energy-efficient light bulbs to a home.

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A drive through Fairfield reveals a wide variety of homes: older Victorians and bungalows and newer designs using the ideas of Sthapatya Veda. There are also small businesses, local industries, tourist attractions and cultural opportunities.

In other words, it's a fairly typical-looking community in America's Heartland. But a revolution could soon take place that will make this town of 9,700 a cutting edge model for other cities, around the world, to emulate.

Mayor Ed Malloy has big dreams for his small town. "I think 5 years into the future, we have an economy that is engaged in sustainability," says

Malloy, adding "I see homes and households that are on firm footing of energy conservation. I see businesses that have re-located here that represent the green revolution."

Malloy says Fairfield will be able to achieve those green goals and many more by following its new blueprint: a roughly 30-page sustainability strategic plan. Fairfield's 20-member Go-Green Planning Commission worked on it for more than one year.

The plan will soon be released to the public. It includes three goals for the town.

1. Create and maintain a sustainability culture.
2. Create jobs, wealth, and opportunities for investment with sustainable development.
3. Achieve sustainable community design, public policy, and infrastructure.

Bob Ferguson co-chaired the commission. He says the plan is designed to impact every aspect of a person's life at the same time.

"And create a world where we can live happily and sustainably," says Ferguson, "where our children and grandchildren can inherit a world that is actually better than the one we are in."

Fairfield has already made some strides toward sustainability. The city has replaced the lights in its traffic signals, conducted an energy audit of its buildings, and agreed to hire a part-time sustainable living coordinator.

Mayor Ed Malloy says it is important to teach residents about sustainability and showcase what works so more people will get on board. "If we are going to have a significant impact on reducing our carbon and changing our behaviors," Malloy says, "it has to be a community-wide effort. Everyone has to see themselves in it, not just the government or the big companies."

While the city's sustainability strategic plan is new, local, more personal

efforts have been underway for some time in Fairfield.

Lonnie Gamble says he has not paid an electric bill in seventeen years because of his use of solar and wind power. He is the co-founder of the Abundance Ecovillage. Gamble says, "The idea is to take care of their energy, food, and shelter needs right here on the site. That makes a lot of the other landscape available to be natural systems, wetlands, prairies if we make our areas where we live functional."

15 homes have been built at the Abundance EcoVillage, which is located on 15 acres of land north of Fairfield. Gamble says another 15 homes could be built.

The eco-village is "off-the-grid." It uses solar panels and a wind turbine for power.

Gamble says that while the use of solar energy can be more expensive, each home is built to drastically cut standard energy consumption. He says that by using 10% of the energy of a standard home, there will still be a savings even if solar energy costs twice as much to receive.

The Abundance EcoVillage produces food in several gardens and rain-catching devices provide water.

The eco-village is not just a sustainable community, it is also a school. Gamble teaches several permaculture classes there during the summer. He is also a professor of sustainable living at Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield.

"There are so many students there now that there is a lot of self-organizing," says Gamble, "these students do all these projects and I don't know what is going on all of the time. I hear all this fantastic stuff and it is very exciting to be involved in that and see what is coming out of the program."

That type of enthusiasm is what Fairfield is banking on when it unveils its sustainability strategic plan to the public.

The document includes some lofty goals. It recommends the town achieve energy independence, plant thousands of trees, and utilize waste for energy or resources. It also suggests Fairfield produce and process locally grown foods.

Mayor Ed Malloy says to truly be successful, the plan must go beyond Fairfield. "We want to create a model, we want to share best practices, we want to create a grass-roots, ground-swell of interest in this area. We all learn from each other and we can set goals as a state to model for the entire country."

Malloy says more than 40 organizations and agencies have signed on to lead the way in implementing Fairfield's sustainability strategic plan. But it will take more than that. It will take each resident, each business owner, each and every person making simple changes to their daily lives to create a fully sustainable community.