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Charleston Green Committee Addresses the Future of our Buildings

Last October Mayor Riley hosted the first meeting of the Charleston Green Committee (CGC), comprised of 22 civic leaders from the business community, nonprofit organizations, academia and city council. The CGC is tasked with creating a plan to green Charleston, including specific recommendations to address the environmental impact, energy efficiency and sustainability of the built environment.

The building community is well represented and very important to the work and success of the CGC. Buildings account for 39% of US CO₂ emissions, making it a paramount issue with respect to energy conservation and global climate change. The residential sector alone contributes 17% of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions. According to the E.P.A. 20-30% energy savings are economically possible

The committee is supported by five working subcommittees, one of which is dedicated to the study of buildings and how the design, systems, maintenance and improvement of buildings can lower the carbon footprint, decrease environmental impact and improve the quality of life here in Charleston.

Of local value, Charleston has some of the finest examples of antebellum architecture in the South. The City boast over 3,000 historic homes and buildings on the peninsula, and an impressive assemblage of architects, craftsmen, and contractors with a sophisticated knowledge of historic restoration and preservation. For these reasons, Charleston will serve as a laboratory for developing energy efficient retrofitting techniques that will simultaneously preserve the integrity and historic character of the city's impressive catalogue of unique buildings.

The Buildings subcommittee is tasked with taking on these issues, making specific studies of residential, commercial and historical buildings, and designing strategies and goals to address the efficiency, health, and sustainability of buildings - municipal, residential, commercial and historic.

Charleston, and South Carolina, is well situated to capitalize on energy saving techniques and become a leader in sustainable building and design. There are 6 certified home energy raters (HERS) in South Carolina, 5 of which live in Charleston, and 408 LEED accredited professionals in South Carolina.

The CGC/Buildings subcommittee is making great strides to educate, raise awareness and create positive change promoting preservation, energy efficiency, and better building standards. To get involved and for more information go to www.charlestongreen.us. The next Charleston Green Committee meeting will be June 10th 8-10am at John Wesley Presbyterian Church.

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