



Pittsfield Charter Township

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Office of the Supervisor

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This was the week we were scheduled to host events at Township Hall marking the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. The Sustainability Committee began planning for the April 22nd Forum (now cancelled) last fall. The Forum was intended to inform and engage community members to further the original mission of Earth Day: To diversify, educate, and activate by engaging you to promote our community's sustainability goals around Energy & Climate; Environment & Waste Management; Agriculture & Local Food Access; Infrastructure; Transportation; and Infill Practices.

While the pandemic prevents us from convening physically, it provides us with a unique opportunity to self-reflect on how we - as individuals, groups, communities, regions, and nations - can find ways to re-enter our physical spaces that promotes fiscal, socio-cultural, and ecological sustainability. It gives many of us the time to reflect on what we can do, post-pandemic, that contributes to creating an equitable community foundation with a commitment to improving water, air, and soil quality. The last time we, at Pittsfield Township, undertook this type of reflection, engagement, and prioritization was during the depths of Great Recession (2009-2011), when we made a conscious decision to take the time to outline a positive vision for our community that was not reactive but, rather, proactive in defining "...a commitment to create a coherent and comprehensive development and preservation pattern that will result in practical, productive, and sustainable growth and conservation in Pittsfield Charter Township." (Master Plan)

That process laid the foundation for much of the work we have accomplished in Pittsfield Township over the past decade including: establishment of a robust multi-modal transportation network; providing for localized self-reliance through the Farmers Market and inter-connected spaces that allow for easy access to daily amenities, recreation, local government, restaurants, and, jobs; environmentally responsible waste management; and an investment in green infrastructure. For a comprehensive overview of our work, over the past decade, on sustainability, including the A-Z list, please go to: <http://www.pittsfield-mi.gov/sustainability>

As we commemorate the 50th Earth Day and prepare ourselves to push even further on our sustainability goals, we are asking such questions as: What can we do to incentivize investment in and use of renewable technologies that reduces our reliance on fossil fuels and other pollutants, including plastics? How can we improve upon our model of localized, self-reliance to provide for enhanced access to local food, recreation, jobs, and affordable housing? The Sustainability Blueprint, adopted by the Pittsfield Township Board of Trustees last month, sets an aggressive timeline of five years to deliver on initiatives that address these questions through: aggressive preservation of green spaces; implementing local solutions for more expansive recycling and composting; more expansive green infrastructure projects; defining 'green' building standards; and investing in renewable energy.

In the end, we must not dwell upon what the pandemic is hindering us from doing but, rather, on what historic opportunities- and consequently responsibilities - lie before us so we may manifest a more **R**espectful, **I**nclusive, **S**ustainable, and **E**quitable future for our community. Let's RISE up to this challenge and deliver on a stronger, more unified Pittsfield Township!

Mandy Grewal, Ph.D.
