

*Lincoln Park Central  
Business District  
Focus Groups  
March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012  
Lincoln Park Middle School*



*Hosted by  
Mayor David  
Runfeldt*



*Facilitated by  
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## Introduction

A team of professional planners from Local Planning Services (LPS) is assisting the Borough of Lincoln Park in amending its Master Plan – specifically, to prepare a central business district subplan. This document will serve as a policy foundation for possible zoning changes and will include an action plan for enhancing and revitalizing the Borough’s downtown area. The expectation is that improved downtown viability should help to increase the tax base contribution from the central business district, thus compensating for the loss of real estate ratables resulting from recent flooding events.



Mayor Runfeldt and Assemblywoman BettyLou DeCroce Addressing Focus Group Participants

After meetings and discussion with the Mayor, the Administrator, and members of the Borough Council, Planning Board, and Economic Development Committee, the LPS team planned a day of “focus group” sessions to encourage stakeholders from the Lincoln Park community to participate in the planning process. Approximately 35 stakeholders gathered at the Lincoln Park Middle School on March 3, 2012, to generate ideas and recommendations for the downtown area.

The day started with introductory remarks by Mayor David Runfeldt and Assemblywomen BettyLou DeCroce, after which the participants formed five focus groups, each with a facilitator from LPS to assist them. Background material on each topic area was mailed to the participants in advance.

Each focus group offered ideas on existing community conditions, a desired future for Lincoln Park, and proposed action steps to achieve that desired future. The focus groups then selected a spokesperson who presented their top five recommendations to the entire group. These recommendations were displayed and everyone was given five stickers to post next to the recommendations that they felt were most important to implement.



Focus Group Presentations



Review and Ranking of Top Five Recommendations

This report presents a summary of focus groups results, including the five priority recommendations from each focus group as well as the detailed contributions from each focus group.

The focus group members exhibited a strong sense of community and purpose and served as a wonderful resource to the Borough in planning for a revitalized downtown. Their input will be used to guide the preparation of the central business district subplan.

## Focus Group Topics

After a review of existing studies and a detailed site investigation, the Local Planning Services team recommended topics for the focus groups. The five focus group topics and the facilitator for each group are as follows:

- **Downtown Viability and Sustainability (Joanne Wiggins)**

- Business Attraction/Expansion
- Promotion
- Identity/Branding
- Organizational Sustainability
- Implementation Techniques



- **Overall Development Pattern (Jim Requa)**

- Zoning/Rezoning Opportunities and Issues
- Mixed Uses and Density Issues
- Parking and Bulk Standards
- Flooding



- **Redevelopment (Bob Tessier)**

- Opportunities
- Incentives/Powers
- Mixed Uses
- Redevelopment Plans/Designated Redevelopers



- **Accessibility (John Madera)**

- Getting There (Train, Bus, Car, Bike, on Foot)
- Parking
- Internal Circulation/Getting Around



- **Streetscape (Tom Stanuikynas)**

- Amenities
- Lighting
- Signage
- Design Standards
- Character/Identity



## Summary of Focus Group Findings

As noted above, the entire group came together for a joint session after the individual focus group sessions and voted individually for five of the recommended strategies. The voting results show that 173 votes were cast by approximately 35 participants.

Of the 25 recommendations presented (five from each focus group), there was a significant amount of overlap. For example, all five focus groups submitted recommendations for “parking” and “image” issues. Eight of the 25 recommendations dealt with downtown Lincoln Park’s image, and 11 of the 25 recommendations touched on vehicle, bicycle or pedestrian circulation.

The recommendations from each of the five focus groups spanned all major categories (accessibility, redevelopment, overall development, downtown viability and streetscape). When viewed as a whole, the recommendations fell into the following general areas:

- Circulation and Safety
- Image
- Parking
- Zoning and Ordinances
- Business Promotion and Development
- Flooding
- Redevelopment

Although the priority areas could be generalized into seven topics, the specific strategies suggested to address them varied across the board. Details are presented on the following pages. Borough representatives and Local Planning Services staff will evaluate and research these strategies and others to create an actionable plan to address the needs of Lincoln Park’s central business district.

# Top Recommendations and Rankings by Group

The following are the top five recommendations from each group. Some of the recommendations between groups overlap so that the voting which occurred at the end of the session (noted in bold) must be balanced against the multiple topics selected by the focus groups. Some focus groups listed more detail in the five recommendations while others summarized their top recommendations.

## *Overall Development*

- Create a plan to get Special Improvement District (SID) funding and identify underutilized properties for potential purchase (**6 votes**)
- Conduct a traffic & parking analysis in terms of future needs (**5 votes**)
- Identify process to approach Wayne, Passaic River Basin Group and Central Basin Regional Flood Board about flooding (**15 votes**)
- Create conditions to attract people to town including parking, walking and facelift downtown for a more positive image by creating zoning flexibility, while petitioning NJT to increase train and bus service (**10 votes**)
- Conduct a formal needs analysis to identify future businesses (**3 votes**)

## *Downtown Viability and Sustainability*

- Parking (**9 votes**)
  - Identify existing spaces
  - Consolidate/share where possible – get property owners together
  - Provide additional parking (possible garage?)
  - Provide better signage directing to parking areas
  - Investigate parking availability at RR station/churches
  - Consider options for employee parking and parking timing (1 hr? 2 hrs? More?)
- Safety/Lighting/Intersections (**6 votes**)
  - Improve safety of intersections for vehicles and pedestrians
  - Improve lighting/safety of parking areas and Main St.
  - Provide crosswalks
  - Communicate with County regarding Main St./restrictions and/or possible ownership
- Business Promotion (**9 votes**)
  - Create collective ad campaign
  - Sponsor more community events
  - Encourage patronage of local business (for ex, 3/50 program)
  - Promote location/friendliness/convenience/service/quality of products/muni and emergency services
  - Attract service-oriented businesses to downtown
- More residential in downtown (**2 votes**)
  - Consider increasing height limitations through zoning (max 4 stories)
  - Benefits to local businesses
  - Enhanced vibrancy/safety
- Make downtown more inviting (**1 vote**)
  - Create more parks/public gathering space in downtown

- Provide enhancement incentives to business owners
- Improve lighting and safety generally
- Encourage unifying elements

### ***Downtown Redevelopment***

- Lincoln Park Image Makeover (**13 votes**)
- Short Term Flooding Mitigation strategy, including road closure issues (**5 votes**)
- Redevelopment areas and plans (Cost Cutters/abandoned homes/ShopRite) (**1 vote**)
- Property Maintenance Code need to be enforced and implemented (**12 votes**)
- More pedestrian friendly/more bike friendly/more parking friendly (Plenty of parking not user friendly) (**9 votes**)

### ***Accessibility***

- Commuting (**3 votes**)
  - Advertise accessibility of bus and train
  - Currently limited train and bus schedule need more weekend and holiday service
  - Train station should be is well lit, clean and inviting
  - Highway access normally excellent for having five main highways but flooding is an issue
  - Valero gas station- eyesore entering town, offer to rent property for parking
- Parking (**11 votes**)
  - All areas well-lit, safe environment, minimal, parallel, poor access to business
  - Municipal lot – needs better signage, crosswalk across U.S. 202
  - Pathway between cleaners and Main Street
  - Citgo should consider moving to Valero thereby creating a new storefront with parking overhead
  - Utilize post office property if it becomes available or ask them to consider moving
  - Green area behind Shop Rite with parking, walking path, greenery leading to Station Road
  - More signage directing to “free areas” like the Municipal Building and Train Station
  - Unsafe lot access behind Dunkin’ Donuts – need a wider entrance
- Bicycling (**4 votes**)
  - Clean bicycle paths that are safe throughout Lincoln Park and the Downtown Area
  - Borough-wide path from Park Avenue to Main Street and on U.S. 202, Main Street
  - Bike racks by Saint Andrew’s Church or by the Victorian home coming over Comly Road, Pinebrook Area and Chapel Hill Area and U.S. 202
  - Bike Path along Morris Canal
- Pedestrian (**6 votes**)
  - Walking path behind Shop Rite
  - Fix the dangerous intersection by slip ramp near the Wexford Inn
  - Add saved, smooth, well-lit widened walkways
- Inviting Main Street (**0 votes**)
  - Need welcoming signs showing businesses by the new Walgreens
  - Variety of storefronts (example: 2 nail salons and 1 beauty salon)
  - Sitting areas, lighting, flowers/plants

- Condos behind Walgreens on top of parking garage, creating more traffic directly to Main Street
- Bump outs at corners/safer crossing, delays of traffic lights, better signage

### *Streetscape*

- Improve Parking in Downtown (**6 votes**)
  - One way traffic on Main Street, allow diagonal parking
  - Additional common parking
- Consistent Building Facades and Storefront Signage (**18 votes**)
  - Create a consistent, cohesive look
  - Enforce and/or create ordinances to maintain buildings
  - Add solar panels and solar (LED) signs
- Visual (**4 votes**)
  - Remove utility wires over streets, create an inviting environment
  - Add more attractive landscaping and maintain existing planters
- Sidewalks (**6 votes**)
  - Need wider sidewalks to accommodate benches, bike racks, outdoor dining
  - Add decorative pavers, street trees
- Directional Signage (**9 votes**)
  - Need a Business Directory with stores and historical Information
  - Better signage directing drivers to additional parking lots

## **Detailed Results and Recommendations by Group**

Below are the detailed notes taken by each group during the focus group session. The notes include all suggestions made by the focus group members pertaining to existing conditions (strengths/weaknesses), future vision of the downtown (goals) and action items to achieve the goals (strategies).

### ***Overall Development Pattern***

#### ***Current State***

- Parking space limited
- Walgreens and empty Shop Rite site vacant w/ no current prospects
- Gas station (remediated) abandoned and in litigation
- “Typical strip mall shopping centers”
- Most farmlands are protected
- Rte. 202 around Walgreens is not pedestrian friendly
- Limited parking around NJ Transit station
- No regional economic planning
- CITGO gas station is an eyesore and creates a negative perception of the town
- Town chronically stuck between progress and doing nothing
- Town needs a facelift
- Always under the specter of flooding
- Designated Town Center by State Planning Commission
- County is responsible for Main Street
- Wetlands issues on some available properties

#### ***Desired Future***

- No more flooding at intersection of Rte. 23 and Rte. 202 (this is an inter-jurisdictional issue)
- River is redirected and its flow is controlled
- Successful towns have been benchmarked against for good ideas
- A mixed-use village exists around the train station
- Many mixed-use developments attract ratables
- A new commercial loop between Main Street and Station Avenue
- Walkable pathways exist to commercial districts
- The planned 149 unit development now exists and is a ratable
- High density housing resolves future affordable housing obligations
- Fully utilized train station
- Adequate sewer and water
- The county is a full partner for traffic lights and other important issues

## ***Downtown Viability and Sustainability/Business Development***

### Existing Conditions

#### ***Positive***

- Friendly/helpful people
- Rated 5<sup>th</sup> best in NJ (as place to live)
- Quick emergency response
- Great food – both dining and shopping
- ShopRite/A&A Italian Deli draw regionally
- Friendly business owners
- All purpose, awesome Mayor – Doctor/Mayor/Fireman
- Personal attention/service
- Family-oriented – great for children
  - Sports teams/facilities
  - Excellent elementary/middle school
  - PAL programs – e.g., Kids’ Night Out
  - Scouts are strong
  - Many religious institutions that draw regionally
- Multi-generational population
- Resident retention
- Nearby airport
- Great location – near 23/80/46/202/287
- Municipal services improving – better attitude

#### ***Negative***

- Muni not very supportive of efforts to make business more accessible
- Parking
- Dangerous turns/intersections
  - 202 and Main
  - Main and Comly (@ Wexford Inn)
  - Unsafe for pedestrians
- Individual parking lots
- Need more inviting environment – feeling of safety, improved lighting
- Not enough places for teens to hang out (now they hang out at Cost Cutters, train station, DDs?)
- Big box stores – need more loyalty from residents
- Pedestrian safety
- Reputation as flood zone (downtown flooding caused by clogged drains/other maintenance issues)
- Smells of gas
- Lighting is poor on Main St. and elsewhere
- Train station is run down – needs improvements

### Desired Future/Vision

- More parks/playgrounds/public gathering places/gazebos in downtown

- More community events – better organization
  - Lincoln Park Day needs improvement
  - Let Main Street businesses provide – no outside vendors
  - No flea markets
  - Entertainment
- Full use of community resources – ask residents to help and they will
  - For ex, 3/50 project asks residents to commit \$50 to three businesses in town
- More housing/offices in town – additional floors
- Available/accessibile parking
- Signage for parking, etc.
- Safe intersections
- One-way traffic flow with angled parking
- Inviting entrances/approaches into town
- Uniformity in store facades/unifying elements
- Greater choice in restaurants/more price points (for ex, reasonably priced chain restaurant)

**Some additional suggestions emailed by one member after the focus group sessions:**

“Ideas for the types of businesses we should try to attract to LP, building on the town's two strengths (or competitive advantages): food industry and child focused.”

**Food Industry:**

- Reasonably priced chain restaurants (for example, Panera's - great because it's non-alcoholic)
- More "A&A" type stores, i.e. gourmet specialty items (on the idea of Calandra's Italian Village in Caldwell, or Corrado's complex in Paterson)

**Child Focused:**

- More sport/activity studios for kids (building on Karate, Kid Connection etc. - how about music lessons, private baseball instruction, etc.)
- Children's medical specialists (there is no pediatrician in town or pediatric dentist).
- Children's special services; physical/occupational therapy, autism, etc. (building on our Special Ed program, which students are bussed in from other towns to attend, and the Craig and Chapel Hill special needs schools)

**Misc.:**

- Clothing stores (we have NONE); either children or adult
- Another Laundromat (one closed) and hardware store

## ***Redevelopment***

The redevelopment focus group recommended that the Central Business District redevelopment be completed in two parallel tracks.

Track One dealing with short term and long term community wide flooding issues which are having a pervasive impact upon redevelopment in the community.

Track Two encouraging redevelopment of selected tracks in the Central Business District

### **Current Conditions and Future Vision**

Real Estate Sales are down in Lincoln Park

- Lincoln Park has a dynamic downtown
- Current residents have less disposable income due to the recession
- Important to keep existing families in the community
- Lincoln Park had low crime rate which is an important attribute
- Lincoln Park has easy access to major regional highways
- Located close to New York City and Newark Airport
- Community impacted by FLOODING
- Public relations issue regarding image of community due to Flooding
- Access out of town shut down due to flooding effects everyone not just those flooded
- People cannot get to work when Route 23 and Route 202 are shut down
- Pompton dam fixed 6 years ago to stop flooding in Oakland, since this change Route 23 has been closed 6 times in the last 5 years
- Upstream development is having an impact on flooding
- Flooding in Lincoln Park Never this Bad – What happened??
- There are parking issues on Main Street
- Need more ratables to help fund fixing flooding issues
- Lincoln Park is a great place to shop (?don't want to live?)
- Parallel track of fix Main Street and address Flooding Issues
- Master Plan should address parallel tracks to get government funding and support

### **Recommendations for future action**

Community Flooding Action Items:

- Buildings in town are built to low and should be elevated
- Need to update community statistics
- Need to enforce building codes and property maintenance codes
- Need to fix flooding issues with regional effort
- Develop CCO when transfer of title occurs / needs approval of Governing Body/enforcement opportunity
- Storm Sewer Lines need to be cleaned
- Beaver Brook and local streams need dredging
- Need to inform flood victims of permit deadlines for fee waivers
- Need to make available a list of repairs that need building permits

- Need strategy for keeping roads open during flooding events such as raising roads in critical flooding points such as Two Bridges and the low side of route 202 by the Grasshopper.
- Need strategies and information regarding raising homes out of flood height of 183 – change local approvals to make it easier
- Timing of upstream detention basins and dams needs to be studied and adjusted
- Community should get information on what Army Corps of Engineers did in New Orleans
- Height variance issue for some buildings to get out of flood

#### Redevelopment Action Items:

- Need more business district ratables
  - Explore redevelopment of Cost Cutters Strip Mall – possible additional stories- additional residential
- Address mixed use building issue of rental vs. ownership for new residential in redevelopment zone – high disposable incomes
- Address low and moderate income families impact in new redevelopment buildings
- Address impact of redevelopment on existing flood prone areas
- Repurpose two vacant homes on Beaverbrook in central business district
- Repurpose two homes on corner of George Cobb Lane

#### Commercial Center Action Items:

- Improve signage for stores on Main Street – looking from Community Center – make a more inviting approach
- Make a safer crossing from Community Center to Downtown- i.e. yield to pedestrian signs
- Make Route 202 two lanes total
- Add possible bike lane to 202 and around town
- Make area more walkable with lighting, attractive paths etc.

## ***Accessibility***

### **Transportation Issues**

- Bus and Train have limited service; need to add Weekend and holiday bus service
- Poorly connected services
- Bus and train station is not maintained
- Not enough need/limited riders – educate and advertise mass transit options

### **Walking**

- Lighting/safety throughout the Borough especially need at Train Station
- Sidewalks should be maintained, add benches, need uniform pathway
- Two Bridges and Pine Brook do not have sidewalks, U.S. 202 has limited sidewalks
- More crosswalks, curb cuts and bulb outs are needed, parking should not block curb cuts
- Speeding Traffic – don't feel safe by Comly Road, U.S. 202, Main Street, Bog and Valley
- Lack of signage by traffic lights (need delayed green traffic lights)
- Improve overall walking environment (time, safety, distance)

## **Bicycle**

- No marked bike lanes or routes
- Limited access to downtown only through train station
- Access road behind train station – need better access to bike store
- More bike parking downtown by Victorian House/Saint Andrew’s church
- Need to improve access above and below Comly Road Overpass
- Bike lanes on Comly Road, Ryerson Road, U.S. 202, Chapel Hill and bike path along Morris Canal

## **Highway Access** – U.S. 202, U.S. 46, SR 23, I-287

- During dry conditions access in Lincoln Park is great, during floods it can become a nightmare
- Municipal Roads need better signage and access
- Main Street seems isolated and needs better/more signage on poles

## **Parking**

- Municipal lot should be reconfigured so parking is easy to find and centralized
- Currently there is a lack of shared or community parking, limited lot accessibility, parallel parking
- Saint Andrew’s Church and the Post Office could be used
- Connect parking with Downtown via CVS and the clock tower with a walkway
- Consolidated parking and utilize signage directing people to “free” parking lots
- Need better access from Main Street to the PAL parking lot (crosswalk to cleaners across U.S. 202)
- Dunkin’ Donuts – safety issues, unsafe driveway

## **STRATEGIES /ACTION STEPS**

- Post office – Move and use old one as a lot
- Lincoln Park needs a regional draw
- Shop Rite property connection to Main Street – park/parking
- Whole triangle should have a variety of businesses, storefronts
- Inviting, informative signs promoting the Downtown Area
- Condo/Apartments behind old Walgreens with parking underneath
- Higher density, bring more mixed uses to Main Street
- Tie Park Avenue in Downtown
- Promote safety through a borough-wide bike and pedestrian plan
- Potential parking at Valero’s Gas station Move Citgo to Valero, build storefront with parking over it
- Open up Station Road between Shop Rite and Downtown gives additional parking and ease to businesses
- More Pedestrian crosswalks, wider and evenly paved
- Road Diet for U.S. 202, turning lane, traffic backups, bottle necking, more consideration needed, may be a negative
- Pedestrian crossing – light by Right turn coming off Comly Road Bridge – Slip Ramps
- Get rid of slip ramp, make it go to light and a turning lane

## Some additional suggestions emailed by one member after the focus group sessions:

### Accessibility

- Train from Lincoln Park Station to Hoboken (must switch for NY) – see schedule at <http://www.njtransit.com/pdf/rail/R0030.pdf>
- [www.lakelandbus.com](http://www.lakelandbus.com) – Route 46 schedule has 2 buses a day to NY from the Lincoln Park Library 6:40 am and 7:25 am. It returns from the Port Authority Bus Terminal at 5:50 pm and 6:30 pm. Fare is \$9.30 each way but you can buy a weekly deck of tickets for \$78 (\$7.80 each way).
- Bus schedule 871 from Lincoln Park to Willowbrook – see <http://www.njtransit.com/pdf/bus/T1871.pdf> then bus schedule from Willowbrook mall for 194 bus – see schedule at <http://www.njtransit.com/pdf/bus/T0194.pdf>

### Streetscape

- Fix the bus stop in front of the library – it's dirty, has a missing glass and during snow storms no pathway is provided for the passengers
- Create bike lane along Comly Road, Route 202, etc.

### Redevelopment or Business Development

- Types of stores to attract to Lincoln Park (where Valero and the old Walgreens is)
  - Farmer's Market in Town twice per month by PAL or in NJT parking lot
  - Antique shop, collectibles or consignment shop like in Andover NJ/Allentown PA
  - eBay Business – operated by the Town for the residents
  - Goodwill
  - Car Rental
  - Gym
  - Bank
  - Catering Business
  - HomeGoods
  - Starbucks
  - BJs

## *Streetscape*

### **STRENGTHS**

- Thriving Businesses (Shop Rite, A&A, 202 Bistro, Bicycle Tech)
- Caring and Involved Citizens and Volunteers
  - Volunteers such as Eagle Scouts have done a lot of successful work in Lincoln Park
- Historic Background
  - Lincoln Park has a Historic Society
  - The Dentist Office in the Downtown is in a historic building
- New Buildings – Clock, Town Hall, Fire Station
- Lincoln Park is Patriotic – Fly U.S. flags on Comly Road Overpass
- The 911 Monument is well kept
- Lincoln Park Day – Street Fair, closes Main Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September

## **WEAKNESSES**

- Main Street is not as inviting as it could be, there is no cohesive look
  - Unsightly dumpsters, cars at gas station, clutter on sidewalks (outside merchandise)
  - Utility wires hanging over Main Street – unsightly, could possibly be made to hang neater
  - Vacant Valero gas station is unattractive
  - Surroundings (ambient noise from traffic) is not conducive for eating outside on Main Street
  - TruValue is an eyesore – outside merchandise, colors don't match Downtown
  - Sign at Library is out of character
  - Inconsistent/unsightly building facades and signage
  - Facades/storefronts are not consistent, uniform or maintained
- Traffic Congestion
  - Changing the direction of Zeliff Place would reduce traffic issues
  - Change Main Street to a one way street, allow diagonal parking
  - Add more left turn lanes at intersections where they are not allowed, some places can't make right Lower traffic speeds especially on U.S. 202
  - Reroute one way streets to post office, reverse flow, better circulation
- Parking
  - Not enough parking (perceived problem)
  - Parking is too far and not accessible (real problem) on the perimeter
  - No handicap parking
  - Parking not convenient
  - Parking is not shared
  - Parking could be added on and near McKelvey (near Shop Rite)
  - Limit parking times
  - No bicycle or motorcycle parking
- Sidewalks
  - Narrow
  - No room for outdoor dining
- Flooding
  - Flash flooding affects Shop Rite, apartment complex and roads surrounding the Downtown
  - Need proper drainage, retention basins
- Other stores in Shop Rite Shopping Center are vacant / unattractive to shoppers

## **STRATEGIES /ACTION STEPS**

- Beautify downtown Lincoln Park
  - More landscaping such more attractive plants in sidewalk planters
  - Maintain current landscaping , plant trees to hide cars at gas station
  - Beautify Lincoln Park Day – Paint Downtown, prizes for best results
  - Lighting – all new lighting/street lamps should match the Clock in the Downtown
  - Add benches on Main Street
  - Add Bike lanes
  - No visible dumpsters

- Signage
  - Welcome to Lincoln to Park sign
  - Street signage should be clear, use LED/solar lighting (see Wayne or Clifton)
  - No neon signs (example Walgreens)
  - “Did you know Sign?”
  - Shopping/Business Directory Sign – promote regional businesses ( Bistro, Bicycle Tech, A&A)
  - History of Lincoln Park Sign - market the History of Lincoln Park /make an informative movie about Lincoln Park
- Maintain a uniform, consistent and cohesive look
  - In line with the spa, Italian Bistro and A&A, find a common theme such as tan stucco
  - Paint when necessary
  - Building heights should be 2 to 3 stories with apartments above
  - Wide brick sidewalks and facades in a consistent theme
- Need to talk and/or discuss issues with business owners
  - Owners need to maintain buildings, facades, signage, paint
  - Create and enforce ordinances requiring owners to maintain property (especially vacant)
  - Design Standards
- Need to promote an identity, play on quaintness of Town (example Ringwood)
  - Town needs character, for example a statue
  - Need a look or logo – trademark Lincoln Park
  - Downtown look more cohesive, blended (all stores should have similar façade)
  - Add more interesting stores like a gym or gift shops
  - Find grants to pay for beautification
- Utilize Green Energy Best Management Practices