



**“Strategy for a Sustainable Dayton” Testimony
Dayton City Commission
Chris Kershner, President & CEO
Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce
August 26, 2020**

Good evening, my name is Chris Kershner and I am the President & CEO of the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce. As the largest regional business advocate in the greater Dayton region, the Dayton Chamber represents nearly, 2,300 businesses and organizations in southwestern Ohio in a nine county region, 23% of those members are located within the City of Dayton. It is on behalf of these members and our sustainability roundtable that I would like to provide to feedback on the “Strategy for a Sustainable Dayton”.

Energy and environmental sustainability have been a key part of our organization’s legislative and regulatory agenda for the past decade, and is one of the primary reasons why we created the Dayton Regional Green Business Certification program. Today, this program boasts several hundred local businesses and organizations that have taken actionable and significant steps in becoming more green and sustainable.

With this in mind, we were frustrated to discover in mid- July that the City of Dayton was moving forward with a sustainability plan that did not take into account the feedback and concerns of the business community. The Chamber immediately reached out to Mark Charles and requested an opportunity to review the plan, vet with our members and provide feedback. We even offered to host a roundtable, inviting interested businesses to participate and provide feedback directly to Mr. Charles. Immediately following the meeting on August 5th, we summarized the discussion and provided it both to this commission and to Mr. Charles. It was our hope that the concerns raised by the business community could be addressed during the revision process, so that we may have an inclusive plan that incorporates pro-business input.

While we have requested an updated version of the “Strategy for a Sustainable Dayton”, to date, we have not received a copy to review. Therefore, I cannot verify what, if any, business community feedback has been incorporated into the final document that you are being asked to approve this evening.

We outlined several key points in our initial feedback that I will reiterate below:

- Flexibility and the opportunity to incentivize compliance rather than penalize non-compliance is a key point that several businesses raised when reviewing the proposed strategies. Whether this takes the form of tax abatement/credit opportunities for green & energy projects, or other incentives, we strongly believe that increased regulations are not the way to a more sustainable community. The business community can, and in most cases wants, to partner on the sustainability solutions for our future.

- The economic development community seeks to continue to position Dayton as an attractive place to move and grow business. We are concerned that points outlined in the plan such as the Sierra Club's Ready for 100 (% renewable energy) by 2035 do not take into account the complex economic situation in which we find ourselves. Daytonians deserve choice. Potential policy that mandates a single energy source for homes and businesses takes away that choice and raises prices for all customers. Investments in renewable energy technologies are important, but both cost and timeline towards implementation must be realistic for our community.
- Affordable utilities drive key investments and growth, both now, and in the future. Both electric and natural gas continue to be important components of the energy conversation, even as we look to find the right mix of transitional and renewable energy products. The City of Dayton must stay competitive to potential site selectors, and an understanding of our fossil fuel requirements that include realistic timelines, and also takes into account cost, reliability and adequate availability for the consumer is critical.
- We also believe that adopting a ban on fracking activity inside the Dayton City limits is more political than it is pragmatic. As this practice is not currently taking place inside the city, and will likely not take place due to our geological setting, we support keeping the report focused on real impacts for our community.
- The establishment of a citywide mandatory "plastic bag" fee is not the right method for incentivizing the use of re-usable bags. Particularly as many of our commercial and retail stores have been the hardest hit during the Covid-19 economic downturn, additional regulations that must be enforced with customers is a tough challenge. Partnering with businesses that want to voluntarily phase out plastic bag use is a better method for accomplishing this goal in the long term.
- Finally, recycling is an important part of a sustainability strategy, however, "establishing a mandatory recycling rate for commercial entities in the City (e.g at least 50% of the waste stream)" does not take into account some very significant challenges our businesses, particularly our small businesses , face in this area. Working with both our owner occupied as well as our tenant spaces will be key to ensuring a successful recycling strategy that incentivizes participation rather than punishes non-compliance.

The Dayton Chamber supports the efforts of the Mayor, the City Commission, as well as City of Dayton Sustainability Manager to identify ways to make Dayton more sustainable, however, we argue that the business community should play a vital role in these deliberations. Our city, like many others, is working hard to get back on our feet again after many decades of decline. We have made great strides in encouraging businesses to relocate and reinvest in the City, to stay and expand and create jobs for our citizens. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue and hope that the suggestions and concerns raised by the business community have shed light on the need to find a way forward that allows for both economic opportunity and sustainability.