

**TESTIMONY OF STEVE HEWITT
CITY ADMINISTRATOR
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HEARING ON:

**“PLANNING COMMUNITIES FOR A CHANGING CLIMATE – SMART
GROWTH, PUBLIC DEMAND AND PRIVATE OPPORTUNITY”**

**BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENERGY INDEPENDENCE AND
GLOBAL WARMING
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

JUNE 18, 2008

Good morning Chairman Markey and distinguished members of the Select Committee. My name is Steve Hewitt, and I am the City Administrator for Greensburg, Kansas. Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this important hearing.

Out of crisis emerges opportunity, Greensburg believes we have a chance to build a stronger town; a thriving town. On May 4th, 2007, an EF-5 tornado hit our town destroying 95% of the community. A small community less than 1500 in population in rural southwest Kansas, what would happen to this little town? Over the past four decades this small town was declining in population and struggling with new economic development. In the wake of the disaster it became apparent that big changes would occur to sustain the town and future generations. This community began to look at ways to rebuild and create a prosperous future through a new design.

Greensburg now has the opportunity it never had before. I believe, as many around the world do, that we have reached a turning point (or tipping point) on the environment. As a community we must do our part, it's simply our responsibility. I am convinced that if we take action, and become environmentally smarter, we can shape the environmental and economic futures of all of us. Green starts with rural America. As a community, we feel that investing in Green is similar to investing in technology. From a financial view, you simply (Greensburg) cannot afford to ignore it.

Greensburg has never been able to compete in Economic Development with the larger communities next to it. However, we now can..... We feel “Green” gives us that chance to compete and sustainable industry will create jobs. Greensburg is blessed with a unique opportunity to create a strong community devoted to family, fostering business, working together for future generations. Greensburg set goals and took the time to put together a comprehensive plan with input from the entire community. As a community, Greensburg realized that we should focus on items such as: Community, Family, Prosperity, Environment, Affordability, Growth, Water, Wind, Energy and Sustainability.

Rural America is expensive.... Perception is that things are less expensive yet that is absolutely false when you talk of building. Fuel costs (rural ares) and energy costs are very high. Add in the lack of knowledge or education about “Green” increases construction costs. However, as a community we must educate and talk of awareness. Building Green can be affordable with simple steps. As a local Government we committed to the highest level of Sustainability, passing a City Resolution (first city in America) to build facilities at the highest level (Green). Yes, the up front costs are higher. However, Greensburg isn’t building a community for the next 20-30 years. Greensburg is making 100 year decisions and “Fiscal Responsibility” must be considered. The pay off saves tax dollars.... Every decision, every building, every issue must fall back to our goals and principals. You build a town thinking of future generations.

This community will be a place where new business grows, a place where sustainability is embraced and lessons learned bolster prosperity. This strategic direction will bring investments. Greensburg and our plan is not disaster based, instead a strategy to benefit from an opportunity to rebuild replicable systems capable of change from the ground up. It is human nature to respond in survival mode after a devastating event like a tornado. A community must focus on the “big picture”. A sustainable community must focus on many factors; such as community design, walkability, services, economic development, energy, transportation, housing, infrastructure, parks, etc (Quality of Life). A community must be connected.

In conclusion, Greensburg’s direction as a model sustainable community creates opportunities; opportunities this community didn’t have before. I am confident that the inspiration has created hope for this community and it will grow to inspire all that care to look.

Discovery Communications is bringing the story of Greensburg to the rest of the nation on its new Planet Green network. The series will give you an even better sense of where Greensburg has been and where it is going.

Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.