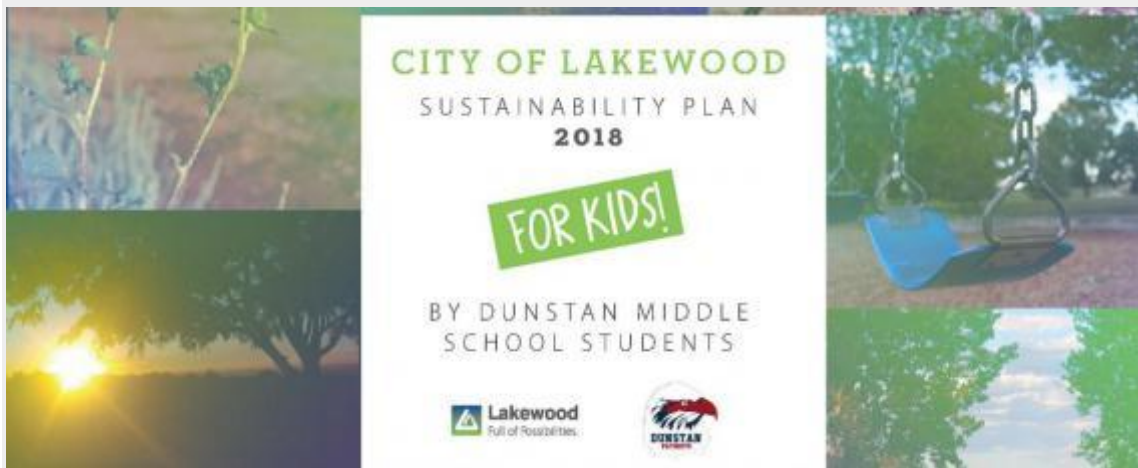


First Kids' Sustainability Plan Receives 2019 APA Honor Award



by Samantha Lasher, City of Lakewood Sustainability Planning Intern

When you look the City of Lakewood's Sustainability website, you will see two plans. One is the 2015 Sustainability Plan, written by staff and one is the Kid's Sustainability Plan, written by 32 middle school students. Lakewood's first Kids' Sustainability Plan received the 2019 APA Honor Award in the category of Community Engagement at this year's state conference in Snowmass Village. "The whole idea behind this plan was to make important sustainability topics more relevant to the generation who has the most at stake and ensure they are part of the conversation and decision-making process" said Jonathan Wachtel, Sustainability Manager at the City of Lakewood. *(Above: Cover of the Lakewood Sustainability Plan for Kids.)*

In fall 2018, 32 Dunstan Middle School students (6-8th graders) wrote a kid's version of the City's 2015 Sustainability Plan for a sustainability elective class taught by science teacher, Audrey Hoffa. "As an educator, this project offered a unique experience. It was amazing to watch the student transformation from this perspective" said Hoffa.



This innovative idea was made possible by the partnership between the City of Lakewood and Dunstan Middle School. “One of the things that made this project successful is letting students come up with their own solutions to problems. That is the way education is going today,” said Hoffa. The result was a kid-friendly 36-page plan, complete with photographs, artwork, goals, and action steps. For example, to go zero waste, students suggested to “Ask teachers for more online assignments and fewer paper assignments.”(Left: *Students reduce their carbon footprint by taking the bus on a field trip.*)

The students stayed involved long after the elective class ended. Students presented their plan at a spring 2019 City Council meeting, won the 2019 Lakewood Sustainability Awards “Defender of the Planet Youth Award”, and hosted a booth at the City of Lakewood’s 2019 Earth Day Celebration educating the community about their plan.

On May 9, 2019 the students presented the Kids’ Sustainability Plan at the Denver Metro Environmental Youth Summit, hosted by Earth Force and Generation Wild, which celebrates youth-driven environmental action projects and leadership in Denver communities. “What I expected before the class started was for it to be boring and lots of work, and I didn’t think it was a very good idea for a class. What actually happened was that it was my favorite class. It was REALLY FUN, engaging, and I learned real life skills,” said one middle school student during the summit.



Kids are often underrepresented in planning, and this project was a strategic way to engage some of the youngest members of Lakewood. This project can be modeled and scaled for use by other cities in Colorado and across the country to engage youth of all ages. (Right: *Three Dunstan Middle School students present their plan at the 2019 Earth Day event.*)

So, what is next? “Our next step in youth engagement is visiting extracurricular environmental and sustainability clubs at local elementary, middle, and high schools to offer resources and advice, and show students how their actions fit

into the bigger picture,” said Christy Cerrone, who works for the City of Lakewood in the Sustainability Division. “We want to provide connections to existing programs, continue to build partnerships, and, ultimately, demonstrate to the community that we are still listening.”