

## In Indy, "sustainability" is an action word

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- (From left) Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, with 2013 Sustainability Award Winners from Big Car Service Center for Culture and Community, Buckingham Companies/The Alexander, Indy Tilth, Monarch Beverage, Quemetco and Hilari Varnadore, director of STAR Communities.
- Lesley Gordon

In Indianapolis, sustainability is not a buzzword. Major players in the local business community, grassroots community organizers and Indianapolis city officials are putting it into widespread practice.

On Wednesday, hundreds of people gathered at the annual Sustainability Awards Luncheon in Downtown Indianapolis to recognize myriad projects through which sustainability becomes an action word.

The awards themselves are divided into five categories, representing the various areas in which sustainability practices are yielding dividends. [See sidebar.] The event also served as platform to update the public on the city's role as a pilot participant in the [STAR Communities](#) program, an initiative to rate and certify cities' sustainability efforts.

In welcoming remarks, Roger Keller, chief operating officer at [Tom Wood Automotive](#), outlined several examples of how his company puts sustainability principles into practice, from recycling aluminum cans to raise money for kids with cancer and using waste oil to heat the dealership to recycling tires, re-using captured rain water in the company carwash, and installing electric vehicle charging stations and solar panels. Tom Wood sponsored this year's sustainability awards.

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- Robert H. McKinney, Karen Haley, executive director of Indianapolis Cultural Trail Inc., and NUVO Editor and Publisher Kevin McKinney talk with Mayor Greg Ballard.
- R. Townsend



[NUVO Editor and Publisher Kevin McKinney](#) was also on hand to congratulate award winners and nominees. He conveyed The McKinney Family Foundation's position that putting sustainability principles into practice is "key to making the city strong and vibrant for future generations." The foundation partners with the Indianapolis Office of Sustainability to present the annual awards program.

[Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard](#) is of the same mind as the McKinneys, having established the goal of making the city "the most sustainable city in the Midwest."

Encouraging sustainability is "common sense" as the city works to improve the local economy, environment and quality of life, Ballard said. And, he added, "It is the right thing to do."

"I want you to recognize that this is being noticed," Ballard said, noting that on his recent trip to India he stood alone as the sole city mayor invited to a multinational energy symposium otherwise attended by officials at the cabinet level and higher.

Among those recognizing the city's work is the luncheon's keynote speaker Hilari Varnadore, director of STAR Communities.

Pilot STAR participants are half way through their first year of collecting data in 44 separate objective areas within [seven broad sustainable goal categories](#), which will ultimately enable STAR to improve the framework through which it certifies cities as sustainable.

"Indy is well-known for diving into all aspects (of the program)," Varnadore said. "Indy is looking at every goal, trying to identify areas in which they are already succeeding and investigating the areas in which they can improve over time."

For instance, among STAR pilot participants, Varnadore said, Indy is the "first to tackle head on" the goal to establish the framework to measure and rate how well a city is sustaining "compact and complete communities."

In addition, she noted, Indy shares its GIS methodology and tools with other communities, enabling others to benefit from the lessons learned on the ground in Marion County.

Ballard said he looked forward to building on the city's past successes and leveraging the information collected through the STAR process "to become even better at what we do."

Ultimately, she said, Indianapolis understands the multifaceted benefits "an integrated approach to sustainability" yields.



Indianapolis  
**SUSTAINABILITY**  
Awards



*The Indianapolis Sustainability Awards are designed to inspire innovation, showcase impact, reward leadership and promote education around the principles of **sustainability**, as well as raise money for the **Sustainability Fund**, which **supports** local initiatives working to progress Indianapolis as one the most sustainable cities in *the Midwest*.*

