

Generations Qualla

Going Green on the Qualla Boundary

Through a community-wide planning effort known as Generations Qualla, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians (EBCI) is taking actions to make more effective use of energy, land and other resources. Generations Qualla was convened by Cherokee Preservation Foundation to implement the Qualla Environmental Resources Initiative proclaimed by Principal Chief Mitchell Hicks.

These days everyone is talking about environmental sustainability and going green, but the Qualla Boundary possesses assets that few other communities can claim. For one thing, it has been important to the Cherokee people for many hundreds of years that they be stewards of the land. Generations Qualla reflects traditional Cherokee values and behaviors, and illustrates how the Tribe strives to strike a balance between natural, cultural, spiritual and economic needs, now and for future generations.

Another important advantage on the Qualla Boundary is that the EBCI is the primary developer for commercial and residential buildings on tribal lands. Unlike most places where there are many developers working independently, most of the development on tribal lands is managed by various Tribal departments, which all report to a common management. That makes it considerably easier to get a strategy implemented on the Qualla Boundary than in other locations.

The EBCI community is excited and inspired by youth leadership in the Generations Qualla effort, too. The Cherokee Youth Council and its Go Green Team were established to provide young members of the EBCI the opportunity to learn culturally based leadership skills. The group has led cleanup and recycling efforts on the Qualla Boundary and has set a great example for other members of the community.



The Generations Qualla initiative was undertaken to benefit young members and future generations of the EBCI.

High prices at the pump have focused community members' attention on the pressing need for energy conservation and energy efficiency. Also advantageous is that the EBCI's economy is based primarily on tourism and gaming, which are easier to move toward a green/clean energy agenda than economies that are based on manufacturing or extraction. Furthermore, tourists appreciate improvements that lead to environmentally friendly places for them to visit.

Actions Plans

The adult and youth committees involved in Generations Qualla created several action plans. The projects that stem from these action plans have received significant funding from Cherokee Preservation Foundation.

Energy Efficiency – Energy efficiency and conservation are key components of the Generations Qualla initiative. Grants from Cherokee Preservation Foundation supported energy audits of approximately 40 tribal and nonprofit buildings on the Qualla Boundary to identify significant ways to reduce energy use.

Up to 30 percent reduction in long-term energy use is expected after additional Foundation dollars were matched by more than \$600,000 from combined EBCI and federal government support to implement changes in 20 buildings and two streetlight projects.

All the buildings are getting programmable thermostats and routine HVAC maintenance, as well as a changeover to new, energy efficient lighting. Many will get replacement heat pumps, low-flow bathroom fixtures, replaced or added insulation, weather-stripping and door and window seals, added storm windows, and occupancy sensors that control lighting, heat and air. A community facility that promotes tribal health is getting solar panels to heat its pool.

In the coming year, several demonstration projects will be implemented to educate tribal members about renewable energy and other energy efficient options available to them individually and to the tribe as a whole.

Cherokee Transit has also been a leader in the work to green the Qualla Boundary. Grants from the Foundation have enabled the creation of more trolley and bus stops, thus encouraging visitors and local people to park their cars and use public transportation.

Increase Recycling – Recycling collected and processed on the Qualla Boundary has been substantially increased by purchasing more recycling containers and enabling the Tribal Recycling staff to expand its processing capabilities. The Go Green Team of the Cherokee Youth Council continues to assist by offering recycling awareness activities to community members.

Green Building Standard – Green building design and construction techniques that can decrease the consumption of energy and other resources and improve environmental sustainability and comfort are now being identified. The intent is to create a green building standard for new construction that will be put before the Tribal Council for adoption.

Qualla Green and Beautiful – This program engages Cherokee communities in environmental improvement and waste reduction projects.

Site and Building Development Process – The site review process for all construction on the Qualla Boundary will be streamlined by completing the Tribe's Geographic Information System.

Cherokee Culture Camp – A culturally based summer camp for Cherokee Middle School students emphasizing environmental sustainability will be established. Youth will learn traditional Cherokee culture and nature lore, and will integrate them with a scientific understanding of the environment and ecology.



The Go Green Team affiliated with the Cherokee Youth Council is leading recycling awareness and other environmental efforts.

The Generations Qualla Vision

The Generations Qualla participants were asked to envision the Cherokee community five years from now. They foresee that recycling will be increasingly instinctive and easy for tribal members. They believe the EBCI will be a leader in the development and consumption of biofuels and other alternative energy sources, and with investments from the Sequoyah Fund, they expect a number of tribal members to have developed green businesses.

The Generations Qualla committee foresees the incorporation of solar hot water and solar electricity in many new residential and commercial buildings on tribal land, and a green building standard that requires smart thermostats, energy efficient light bulbs, low-flow applications and improved construction techniques.

The Generation Qualla committee expects the EBCI to have become a model of environmental sustainability for the Western North Carolina region. Visitors will see signs of this everywhere they look on the Qualla Boundary, and with the improved air quality that has been achieved, star watching will be as spectacular as it was a century ago.

Keep your eye on Generations Qualla. The effort is growing and will be a model for other communities. For more information about the Generations Qualla initiative, contact Cherokee Preservation Foundation at 828/497-5550.