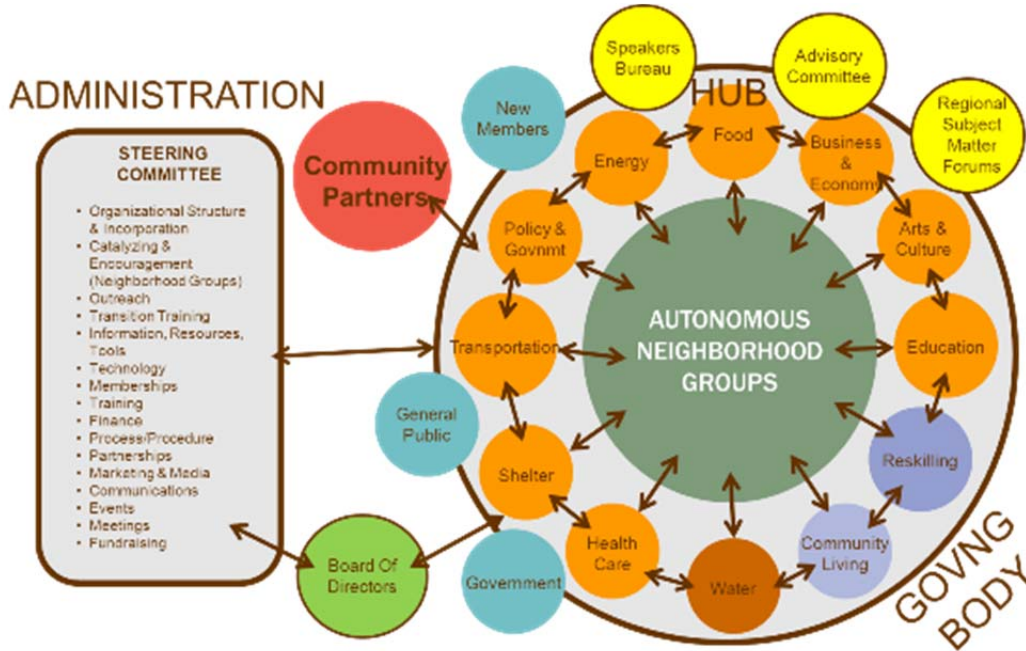


# The Urban Ecology Center and Milwaukee Environmentalism

## Organization Overview and Three Suggestions for Improvement

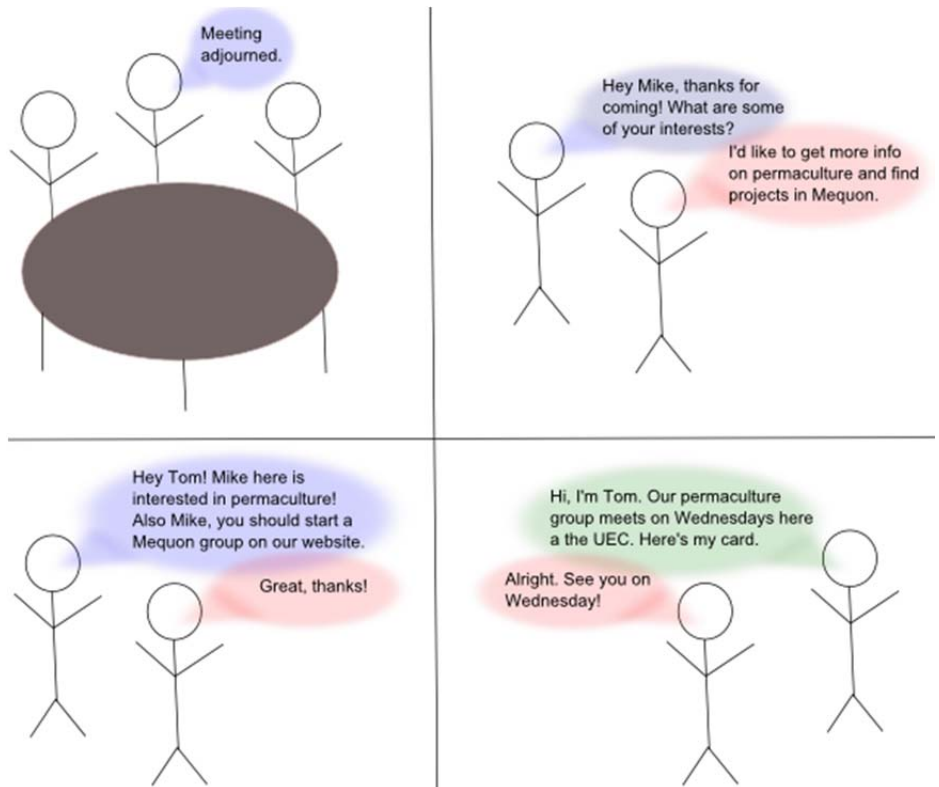
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Transition Milwaukee is a local chapter of the global Transition movement, which aims to facilitate a shift from a high-power, high-consumption lifestyle toward a more sustainable future by building resilient communities.<sup>1</sup> The group has about 500 members, who mainly communicate through a mailing list that promotes upcoming events. Transition Milwaukee is working toward a hub structure in which monthly group meetings provide communication opportunities for neighborhood groups, work groups, community partners, and the steering committee. This young organization faces challenges that the following suggestions aim to address.

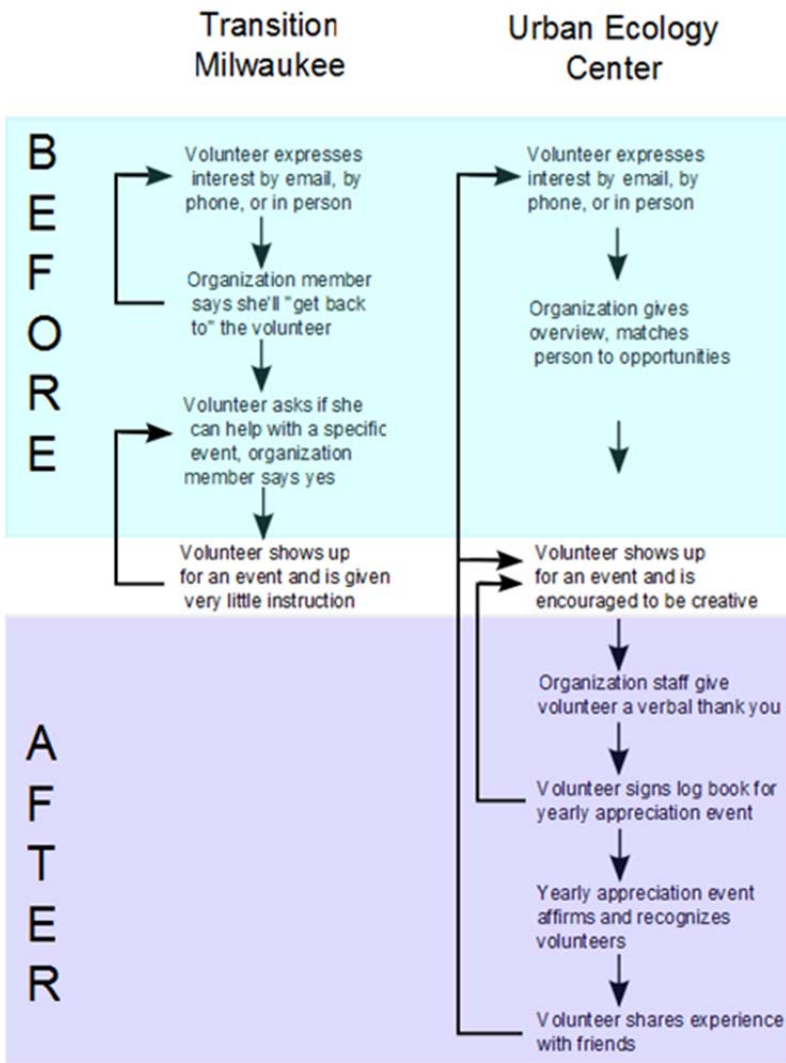
*This is the proposed structure that Transition Milwaukee is working to establish.<sup>1</sup>*

One of Transition Milwaukee’s challenges is engaging new members, since the organization does not have a volunteer coordinator. One way to get new members involved is to facilitate networking at the end of hub meetings. New members may attend an introductory meeting before the hub meeting and meet other new members, but in order to fully address their interests there needs to be a time at the end of the meeting specifically devoted to networking. Directly after each hub meeting, members of the steering committee should reach out to new members in person, ask them what they are interested in, and provide the contact information of the members who lead work groups based on those areas. This in-person engagement could strengthen the volunteer-coordinating purpose of the website by giving new members a sense of personal connection that helps fuel their involvement.



*Steering committee members could help match new members to their areas of interest in conversations after meetings.*

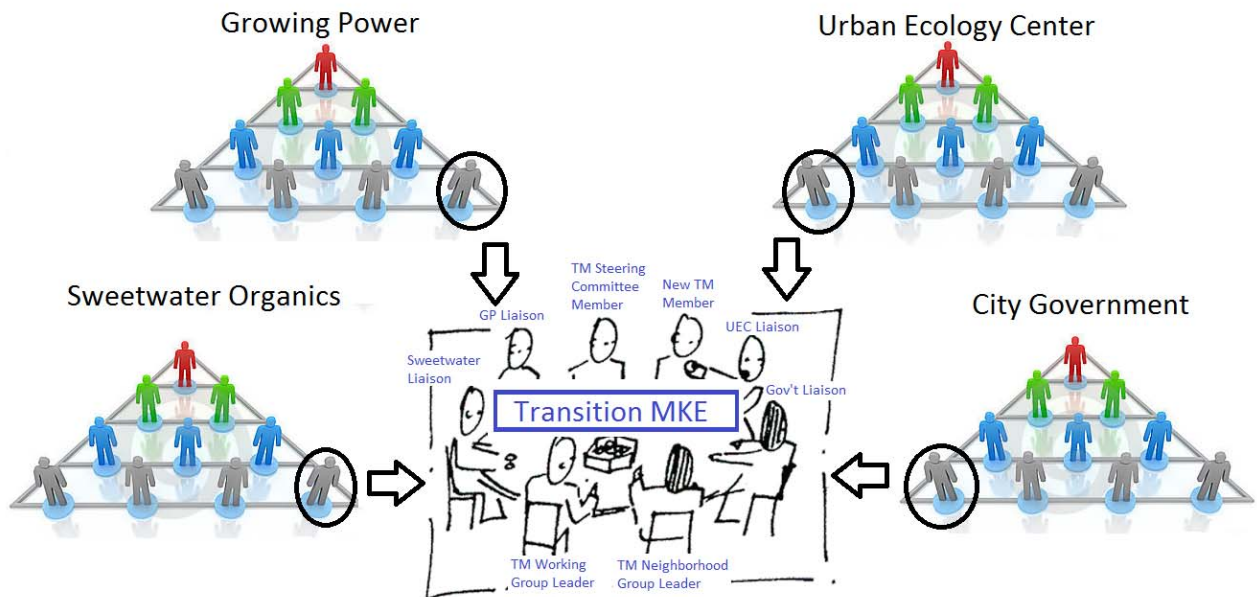
<sup>1</sup> “What is Transition?” *Transition Los Angeles*. 2012. Transition Los Angeles. 10 Apr. 2012. <[http://www.transitionla.org/What\\_Is\\_Transition.htm](http://www.transitionla.org/What_Is_Transition.htm)>



Since Transition Milwaukee is volunteer-run and lacks a volunteer coordinator, it is difficult for new members of the group to find volunteer opportunities that match their interests. In order to allow new volunteers to participate more fully, Transition Milwaukee should promote the use of the working group and neighborhood group forums on the website as a way to get new volunteers involved in their areas of interest. Rather than having one person devoted to coordinating volunteers, the entire steering committee can spread out that responsibility by prompting new volunteers to communicate directly with the leader of an interest group via the website. This would be more effective than the current method of steering committee members referring new members to other people on the steering committee, who are not directly in charge of the groups that take action. Transition Milwaukee can also learn from the successful volunteer coordination model of the Urban Ecology Center, one of the key environmental groups in Milwaukee. The center's focus on connecting volunteers to opportunities that suit their interests as well as follow-up that increases volunteer retention could help Transition Milwaukee amass a larger group of devoted volunteers.

Comparison of new volunteer experiences before, during, and after an event for three key environmental organizations in Milwaukee.

Transition Milwaukee's goal of becoming the center of Milwaukee environmentalism, with a large member group from which other groups can draw volunteers, could be realized through the addition of formal liaisons with community partners. These liaisons, from groups such as Growing Power, the Urban Ecology Center, and the City Government, could attend monthly meetings to foster cross-communication.



Transition Milwaukee hub meetings should include formal liaisons from non-profits, businesses, and governmental groups as well as steering committee, working group, and neighborhood group leaders and new members.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Graphics courtesy of dreamstime.com and dcpug.wordpress.com.