

# - FACT SHEET - SUSTAINABILITY



## What Is "Sustainability"?

According to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, sustainability means "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The concept of sustainability evolved as a response to major issues faced by the world such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, air, soil and water pollution, over-consumption of resources, unemployment, population increase, basic access to water, food, health and sanitation and social inequity.



### Sustainability in the Planning Process

Right now, many cities and counties are taking the first steps toward addressing climate change and sustainable development at the general plan level. The general plan provides a unique opportunity to incorporate sustainability goals into the highest levels of local government, promoting community-wide sustainable practices, encouraging consideration of sustainability issues in all municipal activities and complying with state and nationwide standards such as California's Global Warming solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 32, or AB 32).

Sustainable development encompasses established principles of good planning and advocates a proactive approach to future development. Sustainable development can be further defined as promoting the "three E's:" environment, economy, and equity. For example, a decision or action aimed at promoting economic development should not result in decreased environmental quality or social inequity.

Ensuring that a given decision or action promotes all three E's is often referred to as the triple bottom line. What does sustainable development look like on the ground? In a community that is developing sustainability, the neighborhood is the basic building block of urban design and is characterized by walkability, mixed-use development, and mixed-income housing. Walkability is a function of compactness and density. Attention to streetscape and public spaces is a key design element in creating desirable places to live. Such neighborhoods are more likely to support efficient transit systems. The character and function of each neighborhood is then placed properly within its regional setting. This approach to planning, from the neighborhood to the regional level, is often referred to as smart growth.



## Sustainable development goals and policies

- · Reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Improve air and water quality.
- Decrease urban sprawl:
  - Promote compact, walkable, mixed-use development.
  - Promote infill development.
  - Restore urban and town centers.
  - Limit non-contiguous (leafrog) development.
  - Promote transit-oriented development.
  - Reduce automobile usage and fuel consumption.

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- Protect open space and working landscapes:
  - Conserve lands of scenic and recreational value.
  - Use open space to define urban communities.
- Protect environmentally sensitive lands:
  - Conserve natural habitat lands.
  - Preserve habitat connectivity.
  - Minimize impact to watershed functions, including water quality and natural floodways.
  - Avoid natural hazards.
- Create strong local and regional economies:
  - Encourage jobs/housing balance.
  - Promote equity.
  - Provide adequate housing for all income levels.
- Promote resource efficiency:
  - Promote energy efficiency and conservation.
  - Support energy- and resource-efficient industries.
  - Promote waste reduction programs.
  - Promote water conservation.
  - Improve infrastructure systems.
- Promote public health.



### **City of Pasadena Sustainability Actions**

The City of Pasadena, listed among the 50 greenest cities in America by Popular Science Magazine, is taking action to mitigate climate change and promote unparalleled environmental standards through its implementation of the following actions in support of sustainability and environmental stewardship:

- Adoption of a Green City Action Plan (Sept. 2006):
  - A comprehensive plan which details more than 70 initiatives to accelerate the city's commitment to attain sustainability and protect the world's ecosystem.
- Endorsement of the UN Green Cities Declaration and Urban Environmental Accords (Sept. 2006).
- Endorsement of the US Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement (Sept. 2006).
- Adoption of an Environmental Charter (Sept. 2006).
- Adoption of ordinance creating an Environmental Advisory Commission of local residents (Sept. 2006).
- Adoption of a Green Building Program (Dec. 2005).
- Adoption of Green Cities California Resolution (Feb. 2008).
- Adoption of an Energy Integrated Resource Plan (Mar. 2009).