

Creating A Sustainable City

A Master Plan to Move the City of Sacramento Towards Sustainability

Creating a
Sustainable City



Sacramento

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SECTION 1: Introduction — The Issue.

From concerns over climate change, to drought-related water shortages, to air quality, society faces serious environmental issues locally, regionally, nationally and globally. These issues will affect the quality of life today and for generations to come.

There is a growing body of evidence that a major shift in human behavior is necessary to overcome destructive tides of over-consumption and environmental degradation; and work for a better future for ourselves, our children and the numerous species that share our planet. Our existing economic systems, agricultural systems and automobile-oriented infrastructure are inherently unsustainable.

DEPENDENCE ON NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Our economy and lifestyle is dependent on vast supplies of non-renewable resources, primarily derived from fossil fuels. As these resources are consumed, they will become increasingly scarce and more expensive. We must prepare for this eventuality to prevent a crisis in supply vs. demand. In addition, reducing our dependence on non-renewable fossil fuels reduces climate changing greenhouse gases and gives us greater energy independence.

OVER & EXCESSIVE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

We are using some renewable resources faster than nature can replenish them. Examples of this are consumption of water, lumber, wood and paper products, over fishing and soil depletion. Over-consumption of some renewable resources will cause damage and collapse of many ecosystems.

POLLUTION

Un-intended by-products of manufacturing, consumption, and combustion of resources end up in our air, water, soil, and food. Many of these by-products are toxic. Material from consumption is left over as “waste” and buried in landfills. This leads to numerous negative impacts, including consumption of valuable land for landfills, pollution of that land and associated lands and waters with potentially toxic materials, and removal of resources (such as carbon and nitrogen) from natural cycles.

Our existing economic systems, built environments and cultures are inherently unsustainable. Achieving sustainability in contemporary times will require a major paradigm shift, essentially reversing long-standing trends of consumption and traditional development, and changing our philosophies and behaviors.

SECTION 2: What is Sustainability?

Sustainability is a broad term that generally means that a person or society lives within the means of what the Earth can provide over a long term. When a process is sustainable, it can be carried out over and over without negative effects on the environment or high costs. The definition of Sustainability for the purposes of this Master Plan is:

“Sustainability meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

— United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development.

A sustainable society does not rely extensively on non-renewable resources as a basis for its economy. A sustainable society reduces consumption of renewable resources to levels that can be replenished by nature.

The “Triple Bottom Line” is a common theme for decision-making in a sustainable society. The Triple Bottom Line refers to the consideration of economic stability, environmental sustainability and social equity aspects of a particular decision.

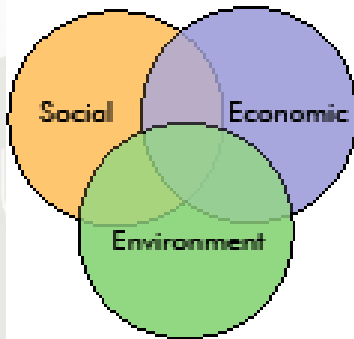
A sustainable society uses non-toxic and/ or biodegradable materials and products and develops “cradle-to-cradle” processes to replace “cradle-to-grave” conventional processes of post-industrial society.

In a “cradle-to-grave” process, materials are moved in a linear fashion rather than through one of nature’s endless cycling and recycling processes. The linear process moves materials that support life from their sources through human consumption that ultimately pollute the sinks (atmosphere, rivers, lakes, ocean, and landscape). Eventually, this one-way process also depletes and destroys the natural landscape on which it depends.

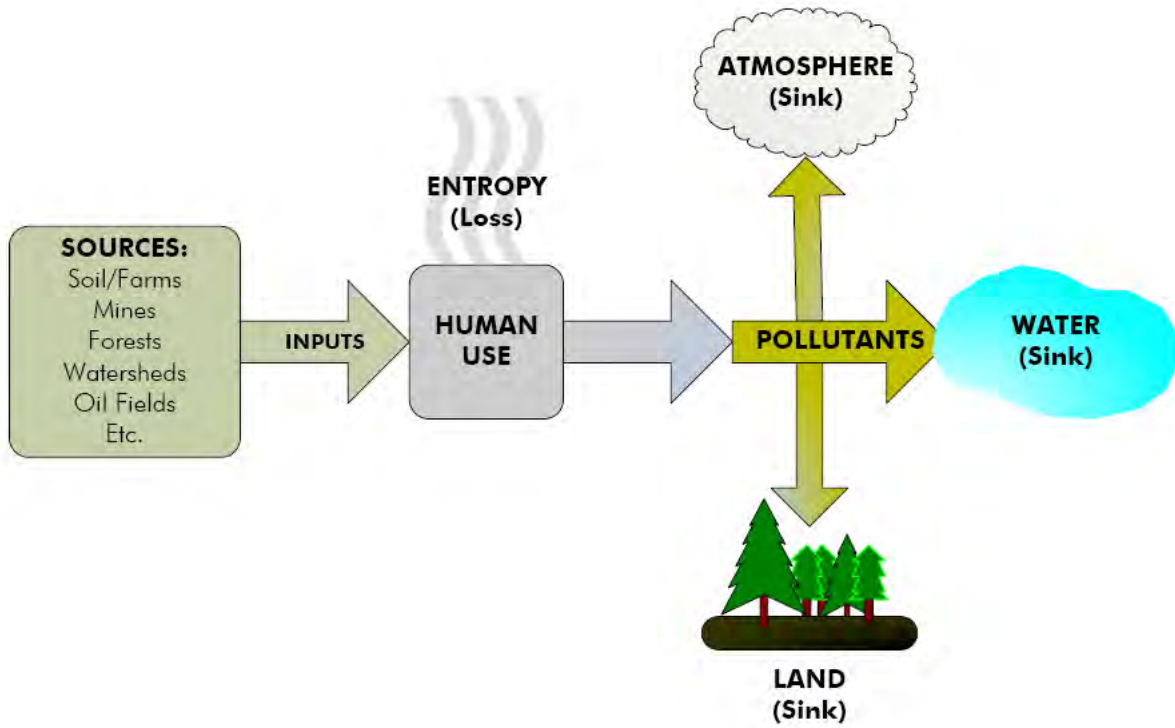
A sustainable or “cradle-to-cradle” process is one that is continually self-renewing. Linear one-way processes must be replaced by cyclic flows, continually regenerating materials that support life.

The two diagrams on the next page graphically represent the “cradle-to-grave” and the “cradle-to-cradle” concepts.

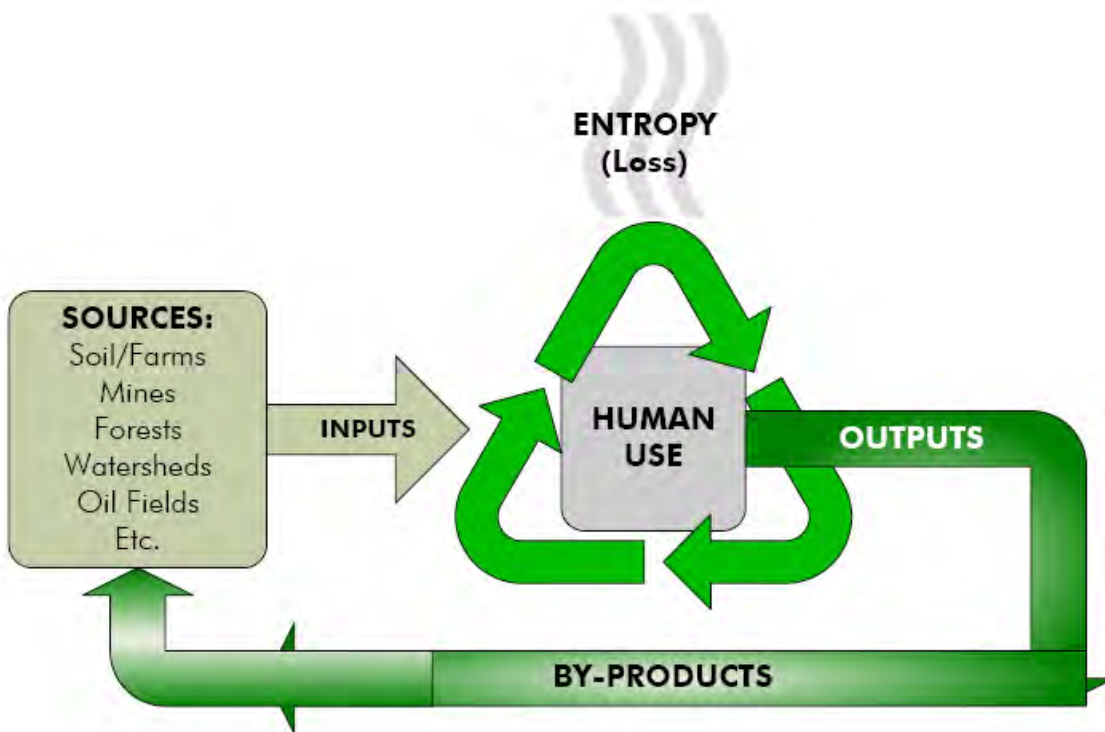
A Sustainable Balance



"CRADLE-TO-GRAVE"



"CRADLE-TO-CRADLE"



SECTION 3: Creating a Sustainable City

Why a Sustainability Master Plan?

As a major landowner, employer, building manager, fleet operator, utility owner and operator, consumer of goods and services, and service provider, the City of Sacramento has both the opportunity and the capacity to bring about significant improvements in environmental quality in and around the region.

By integrating environmentally sustainable practices into City policies, procedures, operations, and fostering collaboration across City government, the City's Sustainability Master Plan- Creating a Sustainable City, will work to protect and enhance the quality of life for present and future generations in the City of Sacramento. Leading by example, the Sustainability Master Plan promotes responsible management and effective stewardship of the City's built and natural environments; transforming the City of Sacramento into a model government agency that is clean, healthy, resource-efficient, and environmentally conscientious.

What are some things the City can do?

- Practice "Restorative Redevelopment"
- Increase the resource efficiency of City facilities.
- Reduce pollution from City vehicles.
- Build and Buy Green.
- Work towards reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions.
- Reduce the City's use of pesticides.
- Protect and restore the City's Urban Creeks.
- Promote Environmental Stewardship.
- Encourage City employees to drive less.
- Improve and optimize Transportation Infrastructure.
- Improve and expand the City's Green Infrastructure.

Moving towards sustainability will require a new consciousness and commitment to do things differently than we have been. It will require the City to: (1) develop new programs and/ or change existing programs, (2) establish new priorities, (3) commit resources to sustainable causes, and (4) collaborate with other jurisdictions within the region to achieve sustainability.

The strategy for moving the City of Sacramento toward sustainability focuses first on changes the City has control over. The city has the most control over its internal operations. In addition, the City has jurisdiction over changes to the built environment (land use, infrastructure, and building permits) within its boundaries.

The Sustainability Master Plan is intended to be a means for Creating a Sustainable City, not an end. The plan is a tool to guide future operational and policy decisions. To proceed in a sensible way to change long-standing environmental practices, it is necessary to develop focus areas, goals, and targets to be achieved.

This Master Plan (Plan) provides the policy framework for how the City will be operated sustainability over the next generation. Although it is anticipated that some of the Targets identified will require additional resources, this Plan also has the potential to:

- Increase local and regional job production, thus keeping money in the Sacramento regional economy;
- Reduce and stabilize long term energy costs for local residents and businesses, and
- Create public/ private partnerships. The City's Goals and Targets are common to many within the State, thus having a clearly stated intent the City will be able to create these partnerships to implement this plan.

The foundation for the Sustainability Master Plan is the United Nations Urban Environmental Accords. The Accords are a set of 21 actions that the United Nations has asked City Governments to adopt and implement over a seven-year period. The Accords, signed by Mayor Fargo in April 2006, are incorporated into this plan.

Concurrent with this process, the City is updating the General Plan. The pertinent Goals, Policies and Targets identified in this Plan will be consistent with the City's General Plan.

SECTION 4: How to Read this Document

The Sustainability Master Plan is meant to serve as a policy framework for the City of Sacramento to ensure that sustainability concerns are incorporated into the City's decision making processes.

The Focus Areas, Goals, and Targets are based on the following Operating Principles:

1. The City will include fiscal responsibility, social equity, and an environmental sustainability in its decision-making processes.
2. The City of Sacramento intends to conduct its business in a way that increases the sustainability of this and future generations.
3. The City will use its jurisdiction over the built environment (land use, infrastructure, and building permits) to improve the sustainability of the City.
4. The City will adopt a General Plan that contains key sustainability policies and practices, and recognizes direction provided by this Plan.
5. The City will be a leader and advocate for sustainability efforts at the regional, state, and federal level.

Sustainability for the City of Sacramento has been separated into nine Focus Areas. The final nine pages of this Plan are comprised of one-page summaries of each Focus Area. Each summary page includes:

Background: Why the City should be concerned about the Focus Category.

Goals: A concise description of the City's objectives that reflects the City's values regarding sustainability.

Targets: Measureable and achievable Target will ultimately be developed to correspond to each Goal. Clear intent and measureable quantities of how the City will address each Focus Category.

1. Energy Independence

Background: The United States is dependent on foreign oil; the country imports 60% of its supply and that percentage increases each year. World demand for oil continues to increase each year. Oil supplies are finite and at some point will decline. These facts could eventually translate into a world wide shortage of gasoline and diesel fuels, negatively affecting the federal trade deficit, harming local job creation, and increasing national security concerns. In addition, the use of carbon based fossil fuels creates greenhouse gas emissions.

It is estimated that it will take many years to transition from a fossil fuel economy to a renewable fuels economy. This time lag between the demands and supply of fuel technology and availability could create challenging market conditions. A gradual transition towards renewable energy is prudent.

The City must continue to support more sustainable land use patterns such as transit-oriented development (TOD), green building design, energy efficiency, alternative transportation options and the use of renewable energy sources for both public and private developments and support local and regional job creation through development of renewable energy production facilities.

Goals:

1. Significantly reduce the use of fossil fuels.
2. Improve the availability of locally and regionally produced renewable energy.
3. Improve energy efficiency.
4. Reduce peak electrical demand.
5. Provide long term affordable and reliable energy that has no price volatility.
6. Replace or renovate obsolete energy or resource inefficient infrastructure (buildings, facilities, systems, etc.).
7. Encourage and recruit green technology companies to locate in the City.

Targets:

1. Work to maximize local and regional renewable energy production with the goal that fifty percent of the energy (electricity, natural gas, motor fuels) consumed within the SACOG region be produced within the SACOG region.
2. By 2020, city operations will be substantially fossil free (electricity, motor fuels).
3. By 2030, energy consumption (electricity, natural gas, motor fuels) of City facilities on a unit basis will be 25% less than the baseline year of 2005.
4. By 2030, energy consumption (electricity, natural gas, motor fuels) per capita for the Sacramento community will be reduced by 25% relative to 2005.
5. By 2030, peak electrical demand of City facilities as measured by annual load factor (energy consumed divided by peak summer electrical demand) will be 75%.
6. By 2015, provide leadership in the SACOG region to complete an energy surety plan.
7. By 2015, the SACOG region will have added 20,000 new jobs to the renewable/ clean energy sector.

2. Climate Protection

Background: Human activities are altering Earth's climate by emitting greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide into the earth's atmosphere. It is estimated over the next 95 years that the earth's average temperature will increase between 2° F and 10° F. Predicted local impacts include, but are not limited to the following:

- Heat waves will be more intense, will occur more frequently, and will be sustained for longer periods.
- Sierra snow pack will be reduced by up to 90%.
- Since more precipitation will fall as rain rather than snow, the risk of winter flooding may increase.
- Since much of our water storage in California depends on snow pack, water shortages in the summer will increase.
- Rising sea levels will cause increased salt water intrusion into the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, potentially putting two-thirds of California's water supply in jeopardy.
- In Sacramento, the number of days per year over 95° F will increase from an average of 18 days/year to as much as 110 days/year.

We are already committed to addressing climate change, however, the sooner we act, and the more we do, the better the outcome. The City has greatest control over its own operations, however, there is potential for the greatest emissions reductions through the City's jurisdiction over the built environment. Furthermore, by providing a positive example of what can be accomplished, the City may influence other jurisdictions to achieve their own climate protection goals.

Goals:

1. Meet the intent of the Global Warming Solutions Act (AB32) (or subsequent laws) for:
 - a. City operations.
 - b. The community of Sacramento.
 - c. The SACOG region by working with community partners
2. Develop a climate adaptation plan for the region by working with community partners.

Targets:

1. By 2050, City operations will have reduced carbon dioxide emissions to 11,000 metric tons which is an 80% reduction relative to 1990 level emissions (or as amended per subsequent state law).
2. By 2030, City operations will have reduced carbon dioxide emissions to 40,000 metric tons (25% reduction from 1990 levels).
3. By 2020, City operations will have reduced carbon dioxide emissions to 54,000 metric tons (equal to 1990 levels).
4. By 2050, the SACOG planning region will have reduced carbon dioxide emissions by 80% relative to 1990 level emissions (or per subsequent state law).
5. By 2020, the SACOG planning region will have reduced carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels.
6. By 2015, the SACOG region will have a climate adaptation plan in place.

3. Air Quality

Background: Air quality is a major environmental health issue for Sacramento, particularly in the summer when an inversion layer traps pollutants close to the ground. Vehicles and other mobile sources powered by combustion (such as lawnmowers) cause 70% of our air pollution. The Sacramento region has been designated as a severe ozone non-attainment area by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA). In the summer, the Sacramento area fails to meet both state and federal standards for ozone. Although ozone in the upper atmosphere protects us from harmful ultraviolet rays, at the ground level it is an irritant that causes the eyes to burn, and it can damage lung tissue. Other problematic air pollutants include carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons, sulfur dioxide, and oxides of nitrogen (NOx).

The air quality in the Sacramento region has actually improved in the last decade due to cleaner cars, smog check requirements, reformulated gasoline, vapor recovery systems on gasoline dispensers, and state and federal regulations for solvents in paints and other consumer products. However, in the future the combined impact of more people, more cars, and more hot days due to global warming will make meeting air quality standards a greater challenge.

SACOG has estimated that there will be 1.7 million more people in the Sacramento Region in 2050 than there were in 2000, which will bring the number of residents to over 3.6 million. If present trends are continued, residents will drive many more miles annually and spend more time in their cars, which will have a negative effect on air quality. In addition, the increase in energy demand accompanying projected population increases will create the demand for additional power plants; this will further threaten our air quality.

Goals:

1. Continue to partner with Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District to provide assistance in meeting and maintaining air quality standards.
2. Encourage City Employees to drive less and engage in clean air practices.

Targets:

1. Work with community partners to reduce the number of “unhealthy”, or “hazardous”, air quality days by 10% based on an established baseline year.
2. Work with community partners to reduce sulfur levels in diesel and gasoline fuels, concurrent with using advanced emission controls on all buses, taxis, and fleets to reduce particulate matter and smog-forming emissions from those fleets by 50% based on an established baseline year.
3. Reduce vehicle idle times by optimizing traffic signals throughout the City.
4. Work to implement a regional policy to reduce the percentage of commute trips by single occupancy vehicles by 10%, relative to an established baseline year.
5. Work with community partners to reduce per household vehicle miles traveled by 25%, relative to an established baseline year.
6. Work with community partners to establish citywide air quality policies and to implement clean air measures for new developments.

4. Material Resources

Background: Landfills have historically been the lowest cost alternative for eliminating waste, however many factors are causing this traditional method to become less attractive:

- Global warming: decomposing organic waste emits carbon dioxide and methane from landfills, both negatively affect global warming
- Diminishing resources; many useable, valuable resources are now buried in existing landfills
- Overuse of non-renewable resources: improved recycling can reduce stress on renewable resources and increase the life of existing landfills
- Land values: Landfills consume valuable land and diminish surrounding land values
- Transportation costs: Increased regulation and land values combine to cause many cities to ship their waste to landfills hundreds of miles away
- Energy production: The energy content from a typical residential waste stream could possibly provide 25 to 50% of a home's energy needs
- Water quality: Rain and landfills combine to create leachates, which can cause local groundwater contamination concerns

In addition, the use of toxic materials to meet the needs of citizens and businesses frequently causes unintended consequences; e.g. mercury in fish and DDT causing a decline in bird birth rates. Recycling and composting are more sustainable alternatives to landfills. Both reuse materials that would otherwise be wasted. Recycling is economical, saves energy, metals and forests.

Goals:

1. Reduce consumption.
2. Encourage the reuse and local recycling of materials.
3. Reduce the use of pesticides and other toxic materials.

Targets:

1. Implement an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) policy which may include bid preferences to suppliers that meet minimum sustainability criteria as defined by the City of Sacramento.
2. Reduce the use of pesticides in City parks and facilities relative to an established baseline year.
3. Work to reduce the use of disposable, toxic, or non-renewable product categories within the City limits.
4. Develop, implement, and enforce a construction and demolition waste ordinance.
5. Work with stakeholders to maximize landfill diversion given reasonable cost effectiveness of constraints.

5. Public Health and Nutrition

Background: The City currently has wellness programs, school food programs, community gardens, trails and exercise facilities. By improving public health, health care costs can be reduced, thus assisting to improve City livability.

Recent research has connected public health and smart growth. A report for the US Green Building Council concludes that such smart development factors such as density, mix of uses, access to recreation facilities and even population and income diversity can be directly related to improved health and fitness of the population.

Goals:

1. Improve the health of residents through access to a diverse mix of wellness activities and locally produced food.
2. Promote “greening” and “gardening” within the City.
3. Create “Healthy Urban Environments” through Restorative Redevelopment.

Targets:

1. Annually, identify one product, chemical or compound that is used within the City that represents the greatest risk to human health and adopt a policy and provide incentives to reduce or eliminate its use by City Operations.
2. Adopt City policies and work to preserve local prime agricultural land and support the viability of local farms
3. Work to maximize the quantity of roads in the City that are “Complete Streets,” efficient and safe for all modes of travel.
4. Employ new products or approaches to soften the edges between the natural and built environments.
5. Redevelop or rehabilitate areas within the City or aged city facilities based on old, wasteful and/or dysfunctional designs to achieve better results for people and the environment.
6. Work with community partners to define a list of many products that should be produced locally or regionally and encourage business development for those products.
7. Work with community partners to ensure each neighborhood in the City has safe and efficient access to quality food sources and vendors.
8. Work with community partners to identify the most basic food products and promote business growth to ensure that products are grown locally or regionally.
9. Work to maximize the number of amenities (e.g. Park, Restaurant, Grocery, Shops, Theatre) that are located within ½ mile of all residents. Ultimately all Citizens should have walkable access to six or more amenities.
10. Promote and support community gardening.
11. Cleanup, redevelop, and reuse areas that are brownfields.

6. Urban Design, Land Use, Green Building and Transportation

Background: In shaping the places in which we live, we shape the patterns of our own behavior. We have built sprawling cities that require long commutes, streets that discourage pedestrians and bicycles, and building methods that waste resources and contribute to pollution and climate change. From the human scale to the regional scale, we need to take a different approach to designing the built environment.

The SACOG Blueprint demonstrated how future population growth can be accommodated in a way that will reduce the consumption of open space, reduce auto dependency and greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality and provide a greater variety of choices for people to live and work, when compared to build-out according to existing development trends. The City is now translating the SACOG Blueprint into the City's General Plan, which will guide the City's future growth and development. The City can implement more sustainable development types mostly through jurisdiction over land use, issuance of building permits, and provision of transportation infrastructure.

Goals:

1. Establish and continuously improve "green" building standards for both residential and commercial development--new and remodeled.
2. Reduce dependence on the private automobile by working with community partners to provide efficient and accessible public transit and transit supportive land uses.
3. Reduce long commutes by providing a wide array of transportation and housing choices near jobs for a balanced, healthy City.

Targets:

1. Implement a policy requiring LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver certification or an equivalent certification for all new City owned buildings.
2. Work with community partners and adopt a LEED/BIG (Build It Green) type rating program for, new and retrofit, commercial and residential single family, multi-family and neighborhood development.
3. Work with community partners to aggressively implement the SACOG Blueprint through the City General Plan and associated documents.
4. Work with community partners to develop and implement a policy that expands affordable public transportation coverage to within one-quarter mile of all city residents.
5. Work with community partners to achieve 80% LEED-type certification of new construction within the City.
6. Implement Bikeway Master Plan and Pedestrian Master Plan facilities to achieve an annual expansion of 5% of the existing system.

7. Parks, Open Space and Habitat Conservation

Background: A City's quality of life is greatly enhanced by extensive parks and open space areas. From small urban parks, to regional parks, to trails and parkways, to agricultural lands, to golf courses, the presence of Nature, open space and habitat areas are essential. The preservation of open space and our rivers and creeks is essential to the health of our community. These areas provide opportunities for recreation, provide habitat for wildlife, and support alternative modes of travel. Parks and natural areas directly mitigate climate change by moderating temperatures from the urban heat island effect.

The urban forest is a key contributor to sustainability in a place named the City of Trees. Trees provide environmental and ecological benefits through improved air quality by storing carbon dioxide that would otherwise contribute to global warming, improving water quality by naturally filtering overland runoff, reducing flood risk through bank stabilization and increased water storage, and providing bird nesting habitat. The urban forest contributes economic benefits by increasing property values and lowering building energy use by providing incidental shade. Trees improve public health and well-being by reducing UV radiation exposure and converting CO₂ to oxygen.

Goals:

1. Expand the number of City parks.
2. Improve public access to open space, particularly along the Sacramento and American Rivers.
3. Maintain and expand the urban forest.
4. Preserve prime farmland and critical habitat resources.
5. Protect and restore the City's urban creek system.
6. Expand "green" park and golf course design and sustainable maintenance practices.

Targets:

1. Work with regional partners to adopt and implement guidelines that will protect and preserve open space, prime farmland and key habitat, including wildlife and riparian corridors.
2. Implement the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Urban Forest Best Management Plan and Urban Forest Enhancement Plan.
3. Acquire land for additional public green space in underserved neighborhoods and infill development target areas.
4. Develop an inventory and restoration and management plans for the City's natural open spaces.
5. Work with community partners to achieve an urban tree canopy goal of 35% per the region's Greenprint Plan.
6. Develop an implementation plan to incorporate sustainable principles and practices into golf course and park design and maintenance, including public education.

8. Water Resources and Flood Protection

Background: Climate models indicate that California may experience an increased risk of water shortages in the future. On the other end of the spectrum, significant portions of the City are at risk from catastrophic flooding. Flood protection in California is an intergovernmental challenge involving federal, state, local and special district governments, and private property owners. Existing City policy is to achieve 200 year flood protection. The Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA), sponsored in part by the City, has developed and has begun to implement a long term plan to achieve 200 year flood protection for the greater Sacramento area. The City will continue to support SAFCA's efforts in this area.

Goals:

1. Conserve the use and protect the sources of water.
2. Work to provide exceptional flood protection.

Targets:

1. Continuously protect the ecological integrity of the City's primary drinking water source.
2. Work with SAFCA and other community partners to develop and implement a plan to achieve 200 year flood protection.
3. Implement the Statewide Urban Water Conservation Council's water conservation best management practices.
4. Continue to reduce sanitary sewer overflows.

9. Public Involvement & Personal Responsibility

Background: Ultimately, sustainability affects every level and scale of organization, from the entire planet to local neighborhoods and individuals. In addressing the global and regional issues facing Sacramento, public involvement and personal responsibility is vital to effectively planning actions and implementing solutions. A central goal of this focus area is to facilitate communication, public outreach and civic engagement on sustainability. Although the City has an important role in addressing climate change, residents and business must be inspired to take actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well. The City should take the opportunity to work with citizens, businesses and community groups to implement personal and business oriented (e.g. County's BERCC (Business Environmental Resource Center) Sustainable Business Program) sustainability initiatives.

Through a wide variety of programs and a broad-based network of partner organizations, — in schools, in parks, in community centers, and in neighborhoods — the City can promote an ethic of conservation and stewardship, and encourage and empower people to take actions that improve environmental quality and quality of life in and around their neighborhoods.

Goals:

1. Adopt an action plan to support a regional vision that fosters a collaboration of citizens, businesses and green-initiative groups to become engaged and contribute to a sustainable future.
2. Promote innovative programs to educate the public about climate change.
3. Commit to leading by example to foster behavioral change throughout the City.
4. Promote an ethic of conservation and stewardship.

Targets:

1. Develop and maintain a City sustainability website to provide as a resource to the community.
2. Work with BERCC and other community partners to maximize the number of businesses within the City which incorporate sustainability into their daily operations.
3. Work with SMUD and other community partners to develop a LEED type, or carbon foot-printing type, of rating system for residents and their dwellings.
4. Develop a network of green-initiative groups to share resources, foster partnerships and unify education and outreach efforts.
5. Provide permanent and on-going educational opportunities for staff and citizens including a myriad of public information material tailored for diverse audiences and applicable to website development, media campaigns and educational initiatives.
6. Launch a "Green Neighborhood" program.
7. Develop a Sustainability "report card" be published annually.
8. Optimize opportunities to showcase Sacramento's environmental leadership through hosting conferences, workshops and events.
9. Encourage residential participation to expand usage of Community gardens.
10. Develop a Green Award program highlighting "green" achievements that include residents, businesses, commercial and non-profit organizations.