

**NOTE:** Kaua'i Planning & Action Alliance recently researched how other communities are incorporating sustainability into their planning processes. The following documents represent some examples of that research. Aug. '09

## Sustainable Communities Defined

A growing number of communities across America have begun this process, gathering a number of local initiatives under the umbrella of sustainability. They are bringing preventive, integrative strategies to bear on crime, health, jobs, land use and community values.

Sustainable development means development that maintains or enhances economic opportunity and community well-being while protecting and restoring the natural environment upon which people and economies depend. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

A sustainable community is one that:

- Acknowledges that economic, environmental and social issues are interrelated and that these issues should be addressed "holistically."
- Recognizes the sensitive interface between the natural and built environments.
- Understands and begins to shift away from polluting and wasteful practices.
- Considers the full environmental, economic and social impacts/costs of development and community operations.
- Understands its natural, cultural, historical and human assets and resources and acts to protect and enhance them.
- Fosters multi-stakeholder collaboration and citizen participation.
- Promotes resource conservation and pollution prevention.
- Focuses on improving community health and quality of life.
- Acts to create value-added products and services in the local economy.

*SOURCE: Minnesota Office of Environmental Assistance*

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development encompasses established principles of good planning and advocates a proactive approach to future development. The basic concept of sustainability is meeting the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. 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 sustainably, 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, also known as neo-traditional or new urbanist development, 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 include the following:

### **1. Decrease urban sprawl.**

- Promote compact, walkable, mixed-use development.
- Promote infill development.
- Restore urban and town centers.
- Limit non-contiguous (leapfrog) development.
- Promote transit-oriented development.

### **2. Protect open space and working landscapes.**

- Conserve prime agricultural lands.
- Conserve lands of scenic and recreational value.
- Use open space to define urban communities.

### **3. 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.

### **4. Create strong local and regional economies.**

- Encourage jobs/housing balance.

- Provide adequate housing for all income levels.
- Encourage the expansion of telecommunications infrastructure.
- Provide a fair and predictable land use planning process.

**5. Promote energy and resource efficiency.**

- Support energy- and resource-efficient industries.
- Promote waste reduction programs, such as recycling.

SOURCE: California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, Oct., 2003. General Plan Guidelines

[www.opr.ca.gov](http://www.opr.ca.gov)

## The Principles of Livable Communities

(South Coast Livable Communities, 2002)

Livable communities reflect the convergence of social, environmental, and economic health. The principles of livable communities are interrelated. Taken together, they serve as a guide and catalyst rather than a rigid set of rules.

- **Transportation and Land-use Planning**

Transportation and land-use planning are integrated. Development is organized in the form of walkable transit-oriented communities so that a range of transportation options is available for all activities of daily living.

- **Rural and Urban Environments**

The interdependence of the region's rural and urban areas is reinforced in public policy and planning. Recreational and passive open space is mixed into the region's centers, neighborhoods, and districts.

- **Public Services and Civic Opportunities**

Vital public places are distributed throughout the community. Public services and civic opportunities are decentralized in convenient locations near the people they are intended to serve.

- **Housing**

A range of housing opportunities and choices are provided for people at all income levels, ages, and abilities with special emphasis on low income and workforce housing.

- **Natural Resources**

Essential resources are conserved and used sustainably. The natural environment is enhanced and protected.

- **Community**

Economic opportunity, social equity, environmental justice, and inclusive participatory public processes are provided to ensure a healthy diverse community.

<http://www.sbcag.org/PDFs/publications/FinalReport081604-complete.pdf>

<http://www.sbbike.org/docs/SCLCT.pdf>

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES RESOURCE PACKAGE

Another way of looking at the characteristics of a sustainable community is by examining behavioural patterns, resource consumption patterns, and policies. In a report prepared for the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy, Nigel Richardson, a consultant, compares strategies for their sustainability or lack of sustainability.

<b>More Sustainable</b>	<b>Less Sustainable</b>
Compact forms of residential development.	Low-density, spread-out residential development.
Mixed land use; homes, jobs and shopping in close proximity/TD.	Segregation of land uses: homes, jobs and shopping separated into uniform tracts or concentrations.
Employment based primarily on education and skills.	Employment based primarily on environment polluting or non-renewable resource based industry.
Movement on foot and by bicycle and transit.	Heavy dependence on private cars.
Wind and solar energy.	Thermal and nuclear energy.
Tertiary treatment of sewage; use of natural means of sewage treatment.	Discharge of sewage into water bodies or water-courses untreated or with low level of treatment.
Protection and use of natural hydrologic systems.	Hard surfaces preventing infiltration; channeling natural water-courses.
Natural open space; protection of wetlands, woodlands, stream valleys, habitat, etc.; use of manure, compost, integrated pest management, etc.	Destruction of natural landscape; "manicured" parkland with exotic species; heavy use of chemical fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides.
Reduction of waste; recovery, re-use and recycling of waste materials.	Landfills, incinerators.

- Nigel Richardson. Prepared for by the Ontario Round Table on Environment and Economy.

Source: Sustainable Communities Resource Package

## WHAT IS A SUSTAINABLE CITY?

The most widely known definition of sustainable development comes from the Brundtland Commission, which defined sustainable development as **"development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."**

SOURCE: Rees, William E. and Roseland, Mark. 1991. Sustainable Communities: Planning for the 21st Century. Plan Canada. 31: 3. 15.

During the preparatory meetings for the [URBAN21](#) Conference (Berlin, July 2000) the following definition was developed to define sustainable urban development:

*"Improving the quality of life in a city, including ecological, cultural, political, institutional, social and economic components without leaving a burden on the future generations. A burden which is the result of a reduced natural capital and an excessive local debt. Our aim is that the flow principle, that is based on an equilibrium of material and energy and also financial input/output, plays a crucial role in all future decisions upon the development of urban areas."*

However, there are many more definitions out there. Let's look at a few:

"Sustainable community development is the ability to make development choices which respect the relationship between the three "E's"-economy, ecology, and equity:

- \* **Economy** - Economic activity should serve the common good, be self-renewing, and build local assets and self-reliance.
- \* **Ecology** - Human are part of nature, nature has limits, and communities are responsible for protecting and building natural assets.
- \* **Equity** - The opportunity for full participation in all activities, benefits, and decision-making of a society."

- *Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED)*: Hart Environmental Data

<http://www.subjectmatters.com/indicators/Sustainability/DefinitionsCommunity.html>

"A sustainable community is one in which improvement in the quality of human life is achieved in harmony with improving and maintaining the health of ecological systems; and where a healthy economy's industrial base supports the quality of both human and ecological systems."  
- *Indigo Development*

## SMART COMMUNITIES NETWORK

This website offers information and services on how a community can adopt sustainable development as a strategy for well being. On this website you'll be able to:

- Read about other communities that have discovered the benefits of sustainable development
- Locate technical and financial resources that can help our community to plan and carry out sustainable development projects, and
- Access model ordinances and codes that other communities have used to implement sustainable development.

### *About Sustainable Communities*

<b>Creating Community</b> <a href="#">Visioning &amp; Implementation</a>   <a href="#">Indicators</a> <a href="#">Building Partnerships</a>   <a href="#">Civic Engagement</a> <a href="#">Justice &amp; Equity</a>   <a href="#">Mediation</a>   <a href="#">Culture</a>	<b>Smart Growth</b> <a href="#">About SGN</a>   <a href="#">What Is Smart Growth?</a> <a href="#">About Membership</a>   <a href="#">Issue Areas</a> <a href="#">News</a>   <a href="#">Library</a>
<b>Growing a Sustainable Economy</b> <a href="#">Agriculture &amp; Food</a>   <a href="#">Fisheries</a> <a href="#">Forestry &amp; Wood</a>   <a href="#">Manufacturing &amp; Industry</a> <a href="#">Small Business</a>   <a href="#">Technology</a> <a href="#">Economics &amp; Finance</a> <a href="#">Urban/Rural Ties</a>	<b>Protecting Natural Resources</b> <a href="#">Water</a> <a href="#">Energy</a>   <a href="#">Air &amp; Climate</a> <a href="#">Biodiversity</a> <a href="#">Land, Forests &amp; Ecosystems</a>
<b>Governing Sustainably</b> <a href="#">Policies, Ordinances &amp; Taxes</a> <a href="#">Public Services</a> <a href="#">Waste &amp; Toxics Management</a> <a href="#">Public/Private Partnerships</a> <a href="#">Community/Regional/State/Federal Relations</a>	<b>Living Sustainably</b> <a href="#">Education, Training &amp; Lifelong Learning</a> <a href="#">Health, Nutrition &amp; Recreation</a> <a href="#">Responsible Buying &amp; Consumption</a> <a href="#">Healthy Home &amp; Property</a>

SOURCE: Smart Communities Network <http://www.sustainable.org/>

## **Conference Strategies for Sustainable Cities**

(The Hague, 23, 24, 25 June 1999: <http://www.denhaag.nl/sust.cities99/theme.htm>)

According to **RRP International**, the five basic elements to the community include:

- \* Affordable housing supporting pride & self-reliance;
- \* Diversified economic development;
- \* Life-long learning;
- \* A self-governing, self organizing community; and
- \* Stewardship of the environment.

SOURCE: <http://www.rppintl.com/5elementsframe.htm>

## **Centre for Sustainable Development**

Sustainability characteristics outlined by the Centre for Sustainable Development include:

- \* the formulation of goals that are rooted in a respect for both the natural environment and human nature and that call for the use of technology in an appropriate way to serve both of these resources;
- \* the placement of high values on quality of life;
- \* respect of the natural environment;
- \* infusement of technology with purpose;
- \* optimization of key resources;
- \* maintenance scale and capacity;
- \* adoption of a systems approach;
- \* support of life cycles;
- \* responsiveness and proactiveness;
- \* value for diversity; and
- \* preservation of heritage.

Source: *Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development*

## Linking Sustainable Community Activities to Pollution Prevention: A Sourcebook

Excerpts from **Beth Lachman's article** describe the issues that will have to be addressed with long-term planning to accomplish sustainable urban development:

"Economic issues include good jobs, good wages, stable businesses, appropriate technology development and implementation, business development, etc. If a community does not have a strong economy, then it cannot be healthy and sustainable over the long term.... From an environmental standpoint, a community can be sustainable over the long term only if it is not degrading its environment or using up finite resources. Environmental concerns include protecting human and environmental health; having healthy ecosystems and habitat; reducing and/or eliminating pollution in water, air, and land; providing green spaces and parks for wildlife, recreation, and other uses; pursuing ecosystem management; protecting biodiversity; etc.... If a community has significant social problems, such as serious crime, then it cannot be healthy and stable over the long term. Furthermore, such a community probably will not be able to address other key community issues, such as environmental problems, because it is so busy dealing with its social problems. Social issues addressed in sustainable community efforts include education, crime, equity, inner-city problems, community building, spirituality, environmental justice, etc. A major assumption of the sustainable community definition is that trying to address such issues in isolation eventually ends up hurting some other part of the community's health...

Most sustainable community efforts also involve an open process in which every member of the community is encouraged to participate. The focus is on consensus building for the community. The emphasis is on communication and cooperation among many different interests and stakeholders from the community and also from those outside the geographic community if their actions might affect the community. Compromise by special interests is also key where necessary. All the different segments of the community at the local and regional level, including businesses, individuals, environmental and community groups, and government, need to work together cooperatively to move toward sustainability.

Another critical dimension to creating a sustainable community is fostering a sense of community. Such sustainability activities try to enhance individuals' and organizations' feelings of attachment, value, and connection to the community. Many experts feel that only by caring about and feeling a part of their neighborhood, town, county, and/or city will individuals truly work together over the long term to develop a healthy community."

- *Beth E. Lachman.*

Linking Sustainable Community Activities to Pollution Prevention: A Sourcebook:  
<http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR855/index.html>