

Willie L. Brown, Mayor
The Sustainability Plan for the City of San Francisco

A Brief Overview

In July, 1997, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors approved The Sustainability Plan for the City of San Francisco, establishing sustainable development as a fundamental goal of municipal public policy, and approving the goals and objectives set out in the plan as ends that the City will strive to attain.

The City of San Francisco has determined that it is in the best interests of its residents to move to a more long-term strategy for its municipal planning. Concern about global environment - issues such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, depletion of resources, and the effect of chemicals on human health, particularly with respect to cancer and reproductive abnormalities - was part of the impetus for the City's sustainability plan.

Another important goal is to create a sustainable economy that provides a good quality of life in the long term for everyone in San Francisco, while contributing minimal impact on the natural world. It was clear that there needed to be more coordination of both of these areas with community planning.

Finally, there was a realization that the best way to reach our goals was to set out a specific strategy and a means to measure progress.

The sustainability plan was the result of a community collaboration made up of over 350 institutions and individuals, which drew heavily from city agency representatives, local businesses, the environmental advocacy community, and local universities. While it has now been endorsed as city policy, the strategic plan was actually drafted by these community participants, not city staff.

There were extensive public hearings in June, 1996, and additional public hearings before three City bodies: an advisory commission on the environment (now dissolved), the current Commission on the Environment, and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

The plan sets out broad social goals, 5-year objectives and objectives that would need to be achieved in order to create a truly sustainable society. It proposes actions that city government, the private sector, and individuals can take to achieve the goals and objectives. The Board of Supervisors has not committed the City to perform all the actions sketched out in the plan; they serve as proposals for further development and public comment.

The plan is divided into fifteen topic areas, ten that address specific environmental issues, and five that are broader in scope and cover many issues. A separate section lists numerical indicators for all topic areas. The indicators were designed to create a base of objective information on local conditions—ongoing measurements that:

- Are obvious in what is being measured,
- Can be found at low cost given the current information-gathering machinery,
- Clearly indicate a trend toward or away from sustainability, and
- Are understandable to everyone and easily presented in the media.

In its final version, the plan is approximately 150 pages long. It is impossible to fairly summarize; it contains hundreds of objectives and actions, and any selection imposes the values of the person excerpting the proposals. However, for the purpose of describing the plan to those unfamiliar with it, following is a selection of some of the objectives San Francisco will be trying to reach within the next five years.

Air Quality

- All municipal building projects meet specifications that incorporate air-quality concerns (including specifications for the use of integrated pest management).
- Vehicle-miles traveled in private automobiles have been reduced by 10%.

Biodiversity

- Invasive plant species are continuously controlled in natural areas.
- The collection and organization of a biological inventory of the city's natural areas and biodiversity has begun.

Energy, Climate Change and Ozone Depletion

- Each building's energy characteristics (such as energy use and insulation) are disclosed when it is listed for sale.
- CFC-based cooling and refrigeration equipment in San Francisco has been reduced by 50%.

Food and Agriculture

- Three additional certified farmers' markets have been established in locations close to San Francisco residential neighborhoods.
- All new housing projects have a dedicated amount of edible-garden space.

Hazardous Materials

- The total amount of hazardous materials stored in San Francisco has been reduced by 10% from 1995 levels.
- An environmental safety program has been created that is focused on educating groups identified as more at-risk either because of their characteristics (for instance, children and people with suppressed immune systems) or their location (for instance, adjacent to a contaminated site).

Human Health

- Basic immunization among children under two years of age has increased to at least 90%.
- Historical and existing environmental contamination has been identified.

Parks, Open Spaces and Streetscapes

- Five recreational facilities in previously under-served neighborhoods have been added and others have been improved.
- Maps showing all the natural habitat areas in San Francisco have been established.

Solid Waste

- City government diverts 60% of its current waste generation.
- The salvage and reuse of construction and demolition materials has increased.

Transportation

- An increase in the total number of person-trips into and within the City will be accommodated while decreasing the number of single-occupancy vehicles.
- Agreement from the nine counties in the Bay Area on improving regional connections through an integrated public-transit-oriented regional transportation plan has been achieved.

Water and Wastewater

- Tax credits and financial incentives are in place for water reductions in homes and businesses.
- A lake management plan has been implemented.

Economy and Economic Development

- A sustainable tourism industry has been created in San Francisco (with minimized impacts on the environment and the City).
- A citywide network of neighborhood boards has been established.

Environmental Justice

- Residents of poor communities are trained in the basic and technical job skills required by new and existing sustainable businesses and industries.
- Decision-making bodies and processes have adequate and direct representation of affected communities.

Municipal Expenditures

- A long-term budgeting policy promoting multi-year funding support and life-cycle costing (full-cost accounting) for capital expenditures has been established.
- All departments have developed a maintenance program that sustains city parks, buildings, streets and other public facilities.

Public Information and Education

- An integrated environmental curriculum is in use in all public elementary schools in San Francisco.
- An accessible clearinghouse of environmental information promotes volunteer networking among organizations and individuals.

Risk Management (Activities of High Environmental Risk)

- Waterway hazards that increase the chance of oil spills have been identified and their mitigation is underway.
- Legislation that mandates fire safety education and training programs has been passed.

Indicators include such items as:

- Number of people going to clinics for respiratory problems.
- Energy cost per tax dollar.
- Tons of waste landfilled annually.
- Difference between the highest neighborhood unemployment rate and the full employment rate.