

Chapter 6:

A Sustainable City

INTRODUCTION

The citizens attending the community workshops identified making Sparks a sustainable community one of the important quality of life elements. Recognizing the importance of leaving a healthy legacy for future generations, in 2008, the City established a Sustainability Committee to develop a Sustainability Action Plan. The Action Plan provides an outline for increasing sustainable practices within the city, highlights the significant accomplishments that the city has already achieved, and charts a course of action for the short-term (1-3 years) and the long-term. The initiatives outlined in the Action Plan are about more than protecting the environment; they also provide maintenance or better level of services with reduced resources and budgets; help citizens save money and increase the quality of life. This chapter is incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan to further emphasize the importance of making Sparks a sustainable community. The Sustainability Action Plan is incorporated into the Appendix of the Comprehensive Plan. For more specific initiatives and commitments, refer to the entire plan in the appendix. The key initiatives are: have the City promote sustainable practices by example; continue maintenance and participation in the City's and regional Sustainability Committees; and establishing educational activities for employees and citizens.

Sustainable development means that contractors, designers and real estate developers aim to create buildings and communities that minimize the depletion of natural resources and use renewable resources so as not to compromise for future generations. Sustainable development practices emphasize efficient use of resources such as energy, water and building materials. The practice addresses building siting, design, construction practices, construction materials, operation, maintenance and removal. It also includes an emphasis on renewable resources generated from sustainable sources, including solar power, hydroelectricity, wind generators and harnessing the earth's geothermal sources to generate energy. A sustainable city is one that practices sustainable methods and works with citizens and neighboring communities to integrate sustainable practices into daily life.

Forms of sustainable practices include Low Impact Development (LID) and Reclaimed Effluent. Low Impact Development (LID) is an approach to use natural systems to manage stormwater. LID emphasizes decentralized, small scale Best Management Practices (BMPs) near the source of stormwater runoff. Regionally, *The Truckee Meadows Regional Stormwater Quality Management Program Lot Impact Development Handbook* was created to implement regional policies, procedures and guidelines to use at the site level to improve

waste quality and reduce stormwater runoff. Reclaimed effluent is treated wastewater from the sewer treatment facility. The treated effluent is used for irrigation of commercial landscaping, roadway medians, golf courses, parks, common areas in subdivisions, construction water and other uses permitted by law. The City published a *Reclaimed Water Treated Effluent Design and Performance Standards* for the design and construction of effluent distribution systems.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Goal SC1 reinforces one of the principles of the Sustainability Action Plan - Reduce carbon emissions.

❖ Goal SC1: Strive to Reduce Carbon Emissions in the City of Sparks

- ◆ **Policy SC1.1:** The City will strive to establish baseline greenhouse gas emission /carbon footprint data based on electric and gas usage for city of Sparks public buildings and vehicle fleet.
- ◆ **Policy SC1.2:** The City shall develop a plan for greenhouse gas emission/carbon footprint reduction for the city's public buildings and vehicle fleet.
- ◆ **Policy SC1.3:** The City, through the development approval process, will strive for anti-sprawl land use policies, low impact development (LID) practices, sustainable landscaping improvements and use of sustainable building practices.

Because the City of Sparks is committed to being a Sustainable City, the initial steps need to be taken by the City to set the example for the community. Goal SC2 states that in order for Sparks to be a sustainable city, the City needs to set the example.

❖ Goal SC2: Promote a Sustainable City by Setting the Example with City Policies and Programs

- ◆ **Policy SC2.1:** The City will work on retrofitting existing facilities with more energy efficient equipment/lighting. For new buildings, the City will comply with the International Energy Conservation Code, achieving a minimum certified rating of LEED Silver or equivalent rating program.
- ◆ **Policy SC2.2:** The City shall continue to convert its vehicle fleet to use alternative fuels and continue recycling of vehicular waste and scrap metals/parts.
- ◆ **Policy SC2.3:** The City shall continue to use reclaimed water for irrigating parks and medians and to use weather sensitive irrigation systems. The City shall also work towards implementing new water conservation measures for irrigating of city facilities.
- ◆ **Policy SC2.4:** The City shall develop a plan to implement sustainable practices for roadway facilities such as use of solar energy for lighting of crosswalks and school flashers; traffic signal synchronization, retrofitting street lights to LED technology or equivalent; transitioning from illuminated street signs to high-reflective street signs; utilizing recycled materials for roadway construction; and explore the use of permeable pavements.

- ◆ **Policy SC2.5: The City shall strive to install renewable energy generation facilities at municipal buildings.**

Sustainability needs to be a regional goal and by maintaining the Sustainability Committee and working with the other agencies in the community, Sparks can advance its own sustainability while promoting regional sustainability. Goal SC3 makes the Sustainability Committee an environmental resource and promotes working regionally for a more sustainable area.

❖ **Goal SC3: Utilize the Sustainability Committee as a Resource for Environmental Stewardship While Promoting Regional Collaboration**

- ◆ **Policy SC3.1: The City shall complete the Sustainability Action Plan and implement the initiatives in the Plan. The Committee shall continue to work with the City departments, other agencies and public to update the Plan reflecting the current technology, conditions and needs.**
- ◆ **Policy SC3.2: The City shall continue to be an active participant in the Regional Sustainability Committee.**
- ◆ **Policy SC3.3: The City shall continue to work with other regional agencies to develop a long-term alternative energy plan including infrastructure for alternative fuels and grant funding alternatives.**
- ◆ **Policy SC3.4: The City shall support regional training, education and employment development opportunities in alternative energy industries.**

The City of Sparks is currently participating with the other local governments in northwest Nevada toward the creation of the Northern Nevada Energy Plan. The intent of the Northern Nevada Energy Plan is to encourage and attract ‘green’ energy industry. Goal SC4 supports the local initiative to strengthen the local economy with a commitment to promoting ‘green’ research, develop, production and industry.

❖ **Goal SC4: Strengthen the Regional Economy by Supporting the Retention/Expansion of Emerging Green Research, Develop, Production and Industry**

- ◆ **Policy SC4.1: The City shall create conditions that support retaining, attracting and developing green energy industry.**
- ◆ **Policy SC4.2: The City shall develop and/or enhance programs that promote technology development.**
- ◆ **Policy SC4.3: The City shall work towards building a cohesive regional identity in ‘green’ energy business sectors.**
- ◆ **Policy SC4.4: The City shall work toward the formation and participate in a “Northern Nevada Green Region Partnership.”**

Creating a community where sustainable activities become daily practices require educational programs which emphasizes the importance of sustainable practices. Goal SC4 recognizes the importance education will play for Sparks to become a sustainable community.

❖ **Goal SC5: Encourage Citizens and City Employees to make Sustainable Practices a daily routine**

- ♦ **Policy SC5.1:** The City shall develop employee education opportunities that could include training classes, education booths at employee events, public/private sustainability projects, etc. with the goal of educating employees about ways to reduce energy consumption and recycle in the work place. This could also encourage employees to obtain the designation of an USGBC Accredited Professional in LEED Green Building Rating System or equivalent.
- ♦ **Policy SC5.2:** The City shall develop a Sustainable Sparks web site to provide information on sustainable practices and how to practice sustainability through programs, classes and incentives. As part of the website, an informational packet should be developed for distribution to the public.
- ♦ **Policy SC5.3:** The City, in order to promote its sustainability program, shall create an award for outstanding business/organization/person that exemplifies the goals and practices of sustainable living and environmental stewardship.
- ♦ **Policy SC5.4:** The City shall continue to develop partnerships focusing on environmental education and outreach efforts.

Goals and Policies from other Elements

The following are the adopted goals and policies from the other elements that relate to A Sustainable City.

Housing

❖ **Goal H6.1: Encourage Sustainable Development and Energy Efficiency for New and Existing Housing.**

- ♦ **Policy H6.1:** Promote sustainable, energy efficient practices for housing stock.
 - **Program H6.1:** The City will encourage residential developers to employ energy conserving measures for building sites, landscaping and solar access through development standards.
- ♦ **Policy H6.2:** The City will encourage developers to adopt “green” development practices.
 - **Program H6.2:** Examine regulatory and other incentives to encourage developers to engage in sustainable practices, including but not limited to:
 - Pursue Green Building certification programs such as U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).
 - Adopt water conservation policy including landscape techniques, materials or equipment.

- Practice low impact grading techniques that minimize the amount of cut and fill, use alternatives to large block retaining walls and generally result in an appearance that mimics the natural slope.
- ◆ Policy H6.3: New development should provide pedestrian, bicycle and transit access to facilitate the reduction of automobile use.
 - Program H6.3: The City will encourage developers to provide circulation plans that are pedestrian oriented and encourage alternative modes of transportation.

Conservation

- ❖ **Goal C14: Foster sustainable development and use of renewable energy resources.**
 - ◆ Objective C14.1: The City will foster the use of renewable energy resources and sustainable development.
 - Policy C14.1-1: The City shall foster and facilitate the placement and use of renewable energy resources and practices throughout the community.
 - Policy C14.1-2: The City shall establish standards by 2015 that require new development to be constructed using sustainable building techniques.

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