



# **Strafford Regional Planning Commission**

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*“Planning and action for sustainable development and an improved quality of life”.*

**Fact Sheet:**

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## **Sustainable Development**

### **What is sustainable development?**

Sustainable development is the notion that humanity should strive to develop the economy in a manner that does not damage the integrity of ecosystems and social well being. It's about working toward a better life for all people for today and for the future. The most commonly accepted formal definition of sustainable development is taken from *Our Common Future*, the landmark 1987 report of The World Commission on Environment and Development. Chaired by former Norwegian Prime Minister, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Commission noted “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

### **What is the goal of sustainable development?**

The goal of sustainable development is to balance economic vitality, community well being, and environmental resource management. It is about ensuring a better quality of life now and for generations to come.

### **Why is sustainable development necessary?**

Sustainable development is necessary because the current growth pattern in this country is sprawl: the expansion of development from community centers into outlying areas. Sprawl involves the large consumptive use of lands linked through a transportation system designed for motor vehicles. This pattern of growth divides the landscape into smaller parcels limiting current and future options for land use, particularly working forests and farms. This pattern requires a more extensive and less efficient built infrastructure of roads, sewers, and storm water management, thereby increasing immediate and long-term costs to communities for services and capital improvements.

### **What are the potential benefits of using sustainable development in municipal planning?**

1. Acknowledges and deals with the needs of people and the environment.
2. Shapes a framework for integrating diverse activities.
3. Identifies community values and resources prior to development.
4. Guides the appropriate siting of development and conservation efforts.
5. Identifies restoration and redevelopment opportunities in developed areas.
6. Develops an encompassing view of the future that many people can support.
7. Provides assurances and certainty through structure and process.
8. Leads to balanced decision-making.

### **What are some possible regional and municipal Master Plan policies for sustainable development?**

As stated in the goals section, some possible regional and municipal Master Plan policies for sustainable development include: balancing economic vitality, community well being, and environmental resource management.

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**How can we – companies, organizations, individuals, families, governments, and schools – employ the sustainable development principles?**

- 1. Eliminate our contribution to systematic increases in concentrations of substances from the Earth's crust.**  
This means substituting certain minerals that are scarce in nature with others that are more abundant, using all mined materials efficiently, and systematically reducing dependence on fossil fuels.
- 2. Eliminate our contribution to systematic increases in concentrations of substances produced by society.**  
This means systematically substituting certain persistent and unnatural compounds with ones that are normally abundant or break down more easily in nature, and using all substances produced by society efficiently.
- 3. Eliminate our contribution to systematic physical degradation of nature through over-harvesting, depletion, foreign introductions and other forms of modification.**  
This means drawing resources only from well-managed eco-systems, systematically pursuing the most productive and efficient use both of those resources and land, and exercising caution in all kinds of modification of nature.
- 4. Contribute as much as we can to the goal of meeting human needs in our society and worldwide, going over and above all the substitution and dematerialization measures taken in meeting the first three objectives.**  
This means using all of our resources efficiently, fairly and responsibly so that the needs of all people on whom we have an impact, and the future needs of people who are not yet born, stand the best chance of being met.

**What are some possible regional and municipal Master Plan implementation strategies to achieve sustainable development policies?**

1. Concentrate development to increase efficiencies  
Develop commercial, residential, public, and industrial uses at high densities of use and space:
  - Minimize lot size; maximize building coverage
  - Build up not out
  - Site buildings close to street and each other
2. Design the transportation system to connect
  - Build a logical network
  - Incorporate multiple connection nodes and pathways in the network
  - Design for driver and pedestrian understanding of spatial connections
  - Design for varying scales of use
3. Provide accessibility for all users
  - Design for driving, walking, biking, bus and rail, trucking, delivery
  - Plan linkage of streets, trails, and sidewalks within and between developed and rural areas
  - Plan for future linkages in site plans and subdivisions
4. Encourage biking and walking

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- Link residences to neighborhood schools, libraries, playing fields through sidewalks and trails
- Include bike racks and lockers at public facilities and in commercial centers
- Enforce speed limits
- Provide cross walks and other amenities that encourage walking
- Site commercial, office and industrial structures close to and facing the road
- 5. Provide opportunities to work and live in the community
  - Retain jobs with a range of housing options for all income levels
  - Site office and industrial development within or adjacent to commerce centers
- 6. Provide places and opportunities for citizens to socialize
  - Create neighborhoods, not subdivisions
  - Encourage the preservation and creation of meeting spaces
- 7. Support the business needs of working farms and forests
  - Allow businesses and services that support a sustainable rural economy such as:
    - Farm stands, veterinary services, and agribusiness
  - Allow for a variety of housing options for farms
  - Provide tax incentives to working farms and forests
  - Plan for the linkage of working farms and forests with other open lands and water
- 8. Develop in previously developed areas first
  - Know the land and building footprints within areas with built infrastructure
  - Seek projects for these areas that meet needs of community
- 9. Protect water quality and water resources
  - Plan at the watershed or sub watershed level for a comprehensive strategy
  - Integrate water resources as critical components within plans and regulations
  - Site and design structures that use natural and built energy efficiencies
- 10. Preserve the diversity of plants and animals
  - Plan at the habitat level for a comprehensive strategy
  - Local knowledge of plants and animals is essential to good planning
  - Protect diversity and health of habitats through the use of:
    - Shoreline and stream buffers
    - Vernal pool protection
    - Upland protection
  - Linkage of habitats is critical to success in preserving diversity
  - Avoid sitting new development in a key habitat area
  - Provide for traditional recreation pastimes
    - Maintain access and trails for other recreation uses

**Sources:**

“FAQ about International Institute for Sustainable Development.” International Institute for Sustainable Development. <http://www.iisd.org/about/faq.asp>

“Sustainable Development Principles”. The Natural Step. <http://www.thenaturestep.org>