

## **CPA #T-01 SUSTAINABILITY**

Initiated by: Planning Division

Applicant: City of Renton Department of Community & Economic Development

### **General Description**

Sustainability is a term that is becoming more mainstream within communities – at the business, government, and household levels – and has become a primary goal for regional growth in the Puget Sound and Northwest. Although there is no formal coordination of sustainability efforts within the City, Renton is becoming a more sustainable community through policy, practice, and in the way we think about and plan for the future. The Planning Division is proposing that sustainability language be added to the Vision and Mission sections of the Comprehensive Plan to mirror City efforts as reflected in Renton’s goals, policies, and programming. Simply stated, sustainability is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability is a concept that recognizes that natural systems are essential to providing both economic needs and quality of life and that actions and practices of today impact needs in the future.

Resource conservation, environmental and public health, transportation, economic development, open space and land use, housing, community education and civic participation, and human dignity are all elements in evaluating how sustainable a jurisdiction is – elements that the City and Comprehensive Plan provide direction for. Comprehensive Plans are effectively a community’s plan for long-term sustainability. Cities within the region are recognizing the importance of balancing and integrating economic, social, and environmental demands by adding sustainability language and policies to Plans.

Local governments in the region have taken different approaches to adding sustainability to Comprehensive Plans whether it be an added element, specific policies within different elements, or by adding supportive language to introductions and Vision statements. Staff proposes that supportive language be included in the Vision section of the Renton Plan. Specifically, the Vision’s three supportive explanatory statements should be expanded to four to include sustainability language and an update in terminology should be made to one of the five steps of the City’s Mission.

### **Impact Analysis**

#### Effect on rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan

No impact foreseen.

#### Effect on the City’s capacity to provide adequate public facilities

No impact foreseen.

#### Effect on the rate of population and employment growth

No impact foreseen.

Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable  
Renton Comprehensive Plan objectives are being met as specified and remain valid and desirable. Attachment B is a list of sustainability related policies within each Plan Element.

Effect on general land values or housing costs

No impact is foreseen.

Whether capital improvements or expenditures are being made or completed as expected

No impact is foreseen.

Consistency with GMA, the Plan, and Countywide Planning Policies

The proposal is consistent with the GMA at the State level. The proposal is consistent with County policies. At the regional level, Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) established direction for cities through the adoption of VISION 2040 which is the regional growth strategy for Puget Sound counties and cities. According to the strategy of VISION 2040, “a sustainable approach is one that strengthens the region’s economic, social, and environmental resiliency, while enhancing our ability to cope with adverse trends, including the challenges associated with climate change.” Within VISION, the three areas of sustainability (environment, economics, equity) are represented as the strategy’s central theme – “People, Prosperity, and Planet.”

Effect on critical areas and natural resource lands

No impact is foreseen.

Effect on other considerations

No impact is foreseen.

**Review Criteria**

RMC 4-9-020G states that the proposal shall demonstrate that the requested amendment is timely and meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. The request supports the Vision embodied in the Comprehensive Plan; or
2. The request supports the adopted business plan goals established by the City Council; or
3. The request eliminates conflicts with existing elements or policies; or
4. The request amends the Comprehensive Plan to accommodate new policy directives of the City Council.

This amendment meets #1 and #2. First, the proposal supports the Vision embodied in the Plan where short-term and long-term goals are to make “Renton – the center of opportunity in the Puget Sound, where families and businesses thrive.” Second, the request supports the adopted Business Plan Mission and Goals established by City Council as the Goals, Vision and Mission work together towards building a sustainable community.

## Staff Recommendation

### Introduction

Staff recommends that the City adopt sustainability themed language into the Vision and Mission sections of the Comprehensive Plan. Proposed text for the Vision statement is a supportive statement that mirrors City policies and programs to create a more sustainable future. Within the Mission section, a couple words of text would be updated. Sustainability is a primary short-term and long-term goal of all cities within the Puget Sound region. The goal is that needs of people today are met without compromising needs of future generations through promotion of economic opportunity, restoring the natural environment, and improving health, education, affordability, and community participation. These are common themes in the City of Renton's Plan.

Effectively, the overall structure of city government is to promote the development of sustainable communities. Puget Sound Regional Council has established sustainability as the overarching theme that connects all regional growth policies and illustrates that all the policies are interconnected and interdependent in creating a sustainable region (see image below).

VISION 2040 Policy Structure



This same type of image could be created with Renton's Comprehensive Plan (growth strategy) as the middle hub, surrounded by all of its Elements and encompassed by an overarching theme of sustainability that illustrates that all elements and policies of Renton's Plan work together to promote social equity, economic vitality, and environmental quality.

### Text Amendments

The proposed text amendments provide for guiding sustainability language to be inserted into the Vision section of the Comprehensive Plan that reflect Renton's sustainability related policies. Additionally, as a housekeeping item the Mission section is to be amended to reflect the Mission on the Renton Business Plan. Staff report attachments provide background for the proposed text amendments:

- Attachment A – Proposed text changes to Vision section
- Attachment B – Comprehensive Plan Elements and Goals, and example Policies, Objectives, and/or Summaries related to Renton's sustainability efforts
- Attachment C – Renton Business Plan

Renton's Vision statement is one line – "Renton – the center of opportunity in the Puget Sound Region where businesses and families thrive." It is stated that these words communicate both "truths about and hopes for the City" – an evaluation of what is happening today and criteria

for the future. More descriptive text follows, where three bullet points expand on the Vision statement and further define what it is. These three points describe a community that is healthy and safe, provides a range of housing options for its diverse population, with a full spectrum of employment opportunities, and is a regional center for recreation in a clean and healthy natural environment. Staff proposes that a new bullet be added to these three, one that encapsulates City hopes and reflects its direction: “A sustainable city that promotes economic vitality, environmental quality, and social equity for current and future generations.” This added bullet would not change the Vision statement but add another supportive explanation that further describes the City. Given that the three existing bullets frame Renton as a “regional center”, a “community”, and a “working town”, an added bullet that frames Renton as “a city” and clearly supports the Vision would complement the existing three bullets, Vision, and Mission, and effectively bring them more closely together.

For housekeeping, the Vision section should match the Renton Business Plan where the Mission will be amended to read:

*The Renton Mission states, unequivocally, the responsibility of the City, “in partnership with residents, businesses, and schools” to take the steps necessary to fulfill the Vision.*

*These include:*

- *Providing a healthy, welcoming atmosphere where citizens choose to live, raise families, and take pride in their community*
- *Promoting planned growth and economic vitality*
- *Creating a positive work environment*
- *Meeting service demands through innovation and commitment to excellence*

Staff proposes a change in text within the Mission statement above. The second of the four steps necessary to fulfill the vision, “Promoting planned growth and economic vitality”, should be changed to “Promoting sustainable development and economic vitality.” This text change is to update “planned growth” to the type of overall development the Comprehensive Plan policies provide direction for, at all scales of development – regional, watershed, city, neighborhood, and parcel. The current term “planned growth” is just one technique of sustainable development at the regional and state levels, typically a term used when states such have adopted Growth Management Policies to curtail sprawl.

#### *Examples In Other Cities*

Many cities and governments in the Pacific Northwest and Puget Sound are identified as innovators in sustainable policy and practice. The metropolitan cities of Vancouver BC, Seattle, and Portland are probably the most recognized, as they compete to be the “greenest” West Coast city through energy programs to reduce building green-house-gas emissions, expanding urban tree canopies, and tally the most LEED rated buildings, green roofs, green streets, etc. Locally, our regional planning authority PSRC and County are similarly engaged and focused on providing sustainable development direction and support. Primary sustainability related topics at the local government level around the region are:

- Energy Conservation and Production

- Climate Change
- Waste Reduction
- Food Production and Security
- Community Health and Safety

These topics are receiving attention as cities and consumers see that current consumption levels are not sustainable given the available resources and land capacity on earth. For example, energy production to meet current needs are producing more air pollutants than the planet's natural resources can absorb (ie. levels of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases). There are substantial consequences – economic, social, and environmental – for continuing current trends. Below are a variety of actions that regional jurisdictions have taken in integrating sustainability into Comprehensive Plans and programs.

**Bothell:** City Council passed a resolution to amend the City's vision statement to "incorporate a commitment to sustainability". <http://www.mrsc.org/ords/B67r1238.pdf>

**Edmonds:** Adopted a Sustainability Element as a framework tying the other Plan elements together, illustrating how their Plan supports sustainability within the Edmonds community. Climate change, community health, and environmental quality have specific sections. [http://www.ci.edmonds.wa.us/CityDepartments/PlanningDept/CP\\_2010\\_adopted.pdf](http://www.ci.edmonds.wa.us/CityDepartments/PlanningDept/CP_2010_adopted.pdf)

**Eugene:** Created a Sustainability Commission to review eight issue areas for best practices, propose actions to Council, monitor implementation, and develop metrics for reporting, assessing, and tracking results. The issue areas are climate change, transportation, triple bottom line, land-use, green building, business initiatives, waste and food. [http://www.eugene-or.gov/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID\\_730&PageID=3726&cached=true&mode=2&userID=2](http://www.eugene-or.gov/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID_730&PageID=3726&cached=true&mode=2&userID=2)

**Issaquah:** Established a community member committee to develop indicators to evaluate how citywide efforts meet sustainability goals overtime. Indicators include: basic needs, business climate, education, community awareness and stewardship, natural areas, mobility, resource use, and green-compact-mixed use development. There are principles to guide indicators and desired outcomes. <http://www.ci.issaquah.wa.us/Files/SB%20Final%20Rpt.pdf>

**King County:** Developed a program to support and connect cities within its jurisdiction on the topic of sustainability, to help educate city staff, community members, developers, and other interested parties with new innovations and technologies, and provide frameworks for beginning sustainability related programming in a city's operations. <http://your.kingcounty.gov/solidwaste/greenbuilding/sustainable-cities.asp>

**Redmond:** Adopted sustainable language into Goals, Vision, and Framework of their Plan and are working towards integrating sustainability throughout the Comprehensive Plan. [www.redmond.gov/PlansProjects/ComprehensivePlanning/redmond2030/ProjectDocuments/](http://www.redmond.gov/PlansProjects/ComprehensivePlanning/redmond2030/ProjectDocuments/)

**Shoreline:** Added a goal to the city workplan to create an environmentally sustainable community and created a strategy with many actions for the community as a whole and within city operations. <http://www.cityofshoreline.com/index.aspx?page=179>

### Examples In Renton

Although not always recognized as a leader in sustainable efforts, the City of Renton is helping lead the way in creating a sustainable region. Renton's business community is also providing leadership in many areas. A significant number of City policies project Renton's sustainable direction, examples being Sustainable Development policies in the Environmental Element, policies to create compact, walkable communities in mixed-use districts, and conservation efforts with potable water, solid waste, and electricity. A number of City programs reflect Renton's leadership:

- Maplewood Golf Course is a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary.
- Solid Waste program is recognized as one of the most progressive in the Northwest in its diversion rates and pickup (recycling, yard waste collection, and food scrap composting).
- The airport is one of ten facilities selected for a federal grant to create a Sustainable Airport Master Plan looking at reducing environmental impacts, maintaining high stable levels of economic growth, and achieve social progress that ensures organizational goals are achieved in a way that is consistent with needs and values of the community.
- In 2010, Cascade Bicycle Club ranked the ten largest cities (not including Seattle) in Puget Sound for overall government-level bicycle planning, policies, and support. Renton tied for second place with Redmond, ahead of Tacoma, Bellevue, and Shoreline.
- The City has Tree City USA designation and has a Community and Urban Forestry Plan.
- The transit center and surrounding supportive housing and businesses are recognized at a regional level as an example of Transit-Oriented-Development for other communities.
- A survey of all cities in King County was recently completed to gauge the level of activities to reduce energy consumption and green-house-gas emissions (GHGs). Renton ranked as one of twelve "highly active cities" with more programming than others.
- Council adopted conservation and efficiency goals for potable water to limit peak day water demand, reduce distribution system leakage, and continue reduction of the average annual water use per customer connection.
- Natural yard care workshops have been provided to educate residents about fauna and flora, use fewer chemicals in yards, and increase soil health for gardens and open space.
- Community engagement is an important element of City programs, with the creation of Community Planning Areas, growth of the Neighborhoods Program, and inclusion of citizen participation in major plan development (ie. Arts & Culture, Parks, Trails, etc).

It is evident that the City of Renton is helping lead the way in creating a more sustainable community and region through policy and programming. The Comprehensive Plan Vision and Mission sections should be amended to reflect this direction.

### **Implementation Requirements**

Not applicable.