

## **Meeting Topic: Sustainability Policy Discussion**

GPAC members present: Michael Worley, David Kim, Kirk Monfort, Sara Adams, Dave Kelley, Jim Owens, Nancy Ostrom, Scott Winter

PMC staff present: Pam Johns, Daniel Hamilton

City staff present: Brendan Vieg, Meredith Williams

### ***Question #1: Preference to Integrate Whole Systems Approach***

1. The Sustainability Element is based on the idea that a sustainable community maintains a balance of economic vitality, environmental protection, and social equality among its residents. This balance of the three principles of sustainability is represented by a three-legged stool, illustrating the system by which the City will maintain and improve its balance of sustainable growth and development. What is the preferred method for integrating the whole systems approach (3-legged stool) into the Sustainability Element?

- Let's make sure we have policies that explain how to react to poor scores on the annual 3Es reporting
- Ultimately the course corrections will come down to Council decisions, as we saw with the 1994 General Plan
- Annual reports need to be followed by General Plan policy changes sometimes to get closer to achieving the goals
- The 3 Es need to be considered for every discretionary project if we're going to reach the goals, but perform annual reports as well.
- Scoring system may not be needed because it will be so obvious to judge the policies success. Too much scoring just adds to the bureaucracy without moving forward the goals. The Sustainability Element will provide strength just by its existence.
- Let's build the assessment system around the goals, the results we want. Make it the way we want. Don't not act out of fear of future unknowns (e.g., future Councils with changing politics).
- This will only work if the General Plan is amended regularly by the council to redirect policies to reach goals, not just amended in reaction to private projects.
- These are political decisions and ultimately at the whim of the Council
- These models are too expensive to upkeep in Chico, so just use a smaller sampling of indicators for each area. Make it simple, choose the best indicators and measure these annually. Make them fit on one sheet; don't over complicate it. A healthy medieval village is close to the goal. Use this one-sheet checklist and staff must review it for every project.
- Measure it with statistics, numbers. Don't use letter grades; they're too subjective.
- GPAC likes the Venn diagram
- Go with the simplicity of #4, the McNall Method
- Then if a project obviously fails in one of the Es, it needs to address these failings to move ahead.
- The more complex the measures, the greater staff time/financial commitment from the City.

- In favor of the use of a Sustainability Element
- Include some version of an annual scorecard with a score for both the *efforts* and the results, not just the results.
- The scorecard system should be simple, and measures are important
- Don't distract the improvement of the existing system by adding clutter with a busy new system
- Keep the measures/indicators simple
- Everyone agrees on having an annual review

### **Question #2: Balancing Values of Key Sustainability Policies**

**2A. Green Building.** Green building standards are an effective way of reducing the environmental impacts created by new development and redevelopment. These standards can include Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards, construction waste recycling, and other factors to make construction have less impact on the environment. **Should the City establish mandatory policies for green building for public, private, residential and commercial buildings?**

- Planning Commission had considered requiring the City to provide the operating costs of the different construction methods.
- It makes sense here because we have many absentee landlords
- Customers need to be educated
- The City shouldn't employ their own mandatory green building codes because California's Building Code (Title 24) are so environmentally strong, but we do need to enforce the existing codes better.
- Chico needs to reduce our transportation-related use of energy (emissions) more than our building use of energy.
- The buildings should be required to be sited for maximum energy efficiency. Mandate things that don't effect the cost
- Codes need to be flexible enough to respond to varying site conditions.
- Allow green building techniques that are alternative (rammed earth, straw bale, etc.) as much as possible.
- Let's incentivize greener building
- Keep it completely voluntary for the private sector
- It actually adds close to 5% to the total cost now, but it's becoming more common (and less expensive) to see green building materials
- Mandate public buildings (and maybe commercial) to be built green
- Include an information system (window sticker) so the consumer knows what they're getting.
- The City needs to educate and inform the public about what is green construction, and encourage residents to build green
- Consider mandating energy retrofits upon resale of existing homes
- The City has to start with itself by mandating it on public buildings first. Keep it incentivized for the rest; the State is restrictive enough.
- As the public demands green building more and more, having that type of construction will actually add value.
- Again, public education is the key. The Building Department should educate the public, and that will help them enforce the code.

- Maybe it should be mandated if it gets us to the goals. We're headed that way anyway.
- The Plan should mandate some degree of construction waste dismantling and reuse/recycling

**2B. Green Government.** The City has the option of establishing policies to require greater efficiency and conservation among government operations. This can include measures to ensure that the City is a leader in implementing new ways to illustrate the ways in which Chico is THE Green City. **Should the City continue to develop its green government practices outside the General Plan (as it does now), or should it formalize these and other progressive practices in the General Plan? Which programs should be a top priority for the City (e.g., municipal waste, self-sufficient solar)?**

- Yes, put them in the General Plan
- Yes, but don't make it so specific that the General Plan must be modified to react to changing technology. Keep it flexible and adaptable.
- Zero waste policy is an example of one that could last and stay meaningful throughout the life of the General Plan
- Define the results you're seeking but not the methods you're using to get there.
- Say what to accomplish, not how in too many details
- Emphasize the more economical choices before the more costly ones
- Education is important, but difficult. We could make use of our public television channels in partnership with CSUC to get messages out. The City doesn't have to own it all.
- The citizens need to own their community again and the City can give them credit.
- The Climate Action Plan will help with the education
- The greening of day-today City operations don't need to be in the General Plan
- The public infrastructure does need to be "greened" and narrowed, and there needs to be a policy about that.
- Include a goal of zero waste
- Reduce the amount of impervious surfaces installed in public right of way
- Title 18 needs to be updated to reflect the goals of the new General Plan
- The City should adopt the environmentally preferable purchasing program (also consider making it local, fair-trade)

**2C. Native and Drought Tolerant Landscaping.** Landscaping for all types of development is a major source of water usage, and has a significant effect on the aesthetics of the community and individual properties, roads, and facilities. **Should both public development (and public-right-of way improvements) and private development be required to use native and drought tolerant landscaping?**

- Make sure that native landscaping is considering our local climate, not just California natives. We have a unique climate in Chico.
- We must address the issue of lawns because that's where the majority of the water is being used.
- Make the plants regionally native. Xeriscape isn't the right term for the local native landscaping.
- It may not be flexible enough
- The bottom line should be water use

- Edible yards are good, more sustainable, but may not meet the definition of native or drought tolerant
- Find a balance between native and weeds.
- The City needs to use drought tolerant landscaping and irrigation on its properties
- Mandate grey water systems in new homes
- Native landscapes attract wildlife
- Focus on climate-sensitive plants rather than natives only

Public Comments

- Education is key. Plant recommendation sheets could be distributed to points of sale (Home Depot, nurseries, etc...)
- Work on the equation of success and measure success against that.