



BEST PRACTICE AREA 16: GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Vision

Local governments in the Joint Planning District area lead by example, setting a standard for sustainability. In addition, governments' proactive and visionary policies help the entire Joint Planning District move toward sustainability.

Background

Government policies should be based on a shared vision of what a community and/or area wants to be. To move the Joint Planning District toward sustainability requires a broad awareness and understanding of sustainability. Although government can help lead and inspire the community, ultimately sustainability develops out of an informed grassroots effort that helps guide government policies.

Goals

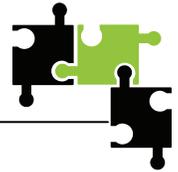
- A. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions and community affairs.
- B. Ensure that land use approval procedures are predictable, fair, and cost effective.
- C. Enact policies and regulations that include incentives to help move the Joint Planning District toward sustainability.
- D. Remove regulatory obstacles and barriers that prevent or hinder the Joint Planning District's move toward sustainability.
- E. Promote intergovernmental cooperation and consistency based on a shared understanding of sustainability. (see also BPAs 12 & 15)

Initiatives and Action Steps

The following three initiatives for initial action were identified through public input and reflect local stakeholders' views of which goals would have the most profound effect on moving the Joint Planning District toward sustainability.

The first initiative recognizes that broad awareness and understanding of sustainability are critical tools in helping move the Joint Planning District toward sustainability. As residents, policymakers, developers, and others become more aware that sustainability is a win-win-win for the natural environment, our quality of life, and the economy, we will find more people supporting sustainability, voluntarily moving toward sustainable practices, and





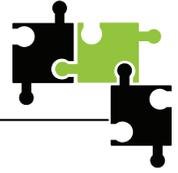
becoming more involved in community affairs. Government can help guide and inspire sustainability efforts, but others must participate in these efforts as well.

The second initiative acknowledges that government, working with the people of the area, can play an important role in helping to articulate a strong, shared vision of sustainability that will allow all parties to work together effectively toward shared sustainability goals and actions. It is especially important that neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions have a general shared understanding of sustainability so that they can work together to ensure that the whole Joint Planning District functions in a connected and sustainable manner.

The third initiative recognizes that government regulations can help or hinder the area's move toward sustainability. By removing existing inappropriate government regulations that hinder sustainable actions and by providing appropriate incentives to encourage sustainable actions, government policies can help the area attain its shared vision for a sustainable region.

1. **Learning and growing together:** Encourage community and stakeholder education and collaboration in development decisions and community affairs.
 - a. Use a variety of means to promote a shared awareness and understanding of sustainability principles among all in the community. For example, consider conducting a variety of sustainability workshops throughout the community; prepare sustainability articles and brochures for community publications; use community websites and local cable television to distribute sustainability information; use community facilities with interpretive displays as a showcase for sustainable practices; implement a sustainability awards program; and so on.
 - b. Actively solicit broad citizen participation in community affairs (such as community events and initiatives) and community decisions (such as planning efforts and development decisions).
 - c. Coordinate with K-12 schools and institutions of higher education to promote opportunities for students and youth to be involved in community affairs.
 - d. Identify underrepresented groups in the community and explore ways to gather their ideas and input into community affairs and development decisions.
 - e. Use local experts to help review and craft sustainable ordinances. For example, consult representatives from local utility companies to help craft energy conservation design standards.
2. **Move forward with a shared understanding of sustainability:** Promote inter-governmental cooperation and consistency based on a shared understanding of

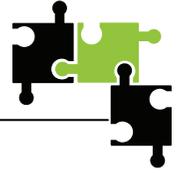




sustainability and by ensuring that land use approval procedures are predictable, fair, and cost effective.

- a. Work to ensure open communication and good working relationships between neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions.
 - b. When practical and/or mutually beneficial, partner with neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions to provide efficient, cost-effective, high-quality services rooted in principles of sustainability.
 - c. Provide meaningful opportunities for staff, appointed and elected officials, and citizens to learn about sustainability and to keep involved in sustainability efforts.
 - d. Develop and implement sustainability protocols that will help inform decisions relating to development and community affairs. For example, develop a sustainability checklist (tied to the community's regulations) that developers and decision makers can refer to when considering action on a development project.
 - e. Ensure that government decisions clearly outline what impacts their actions will have on the community's sustainability goals. Publicly reiterate the community's vision for sustainability when taking pertinent community actions.
 - f. When feasible, use a sustainability coordinator to help ensure that community actions reflect principles of sustainability.
 - g. Recognize and address cultural differences when developing a shared vision for sustainability for the community and region.
3. **Make sustainability easy:** Remove regulatory obstacles and barriers and provide incentives that help the Joint Planning District move toward sustainability.
- a. Review and update ordinances and regulations to ensure that they are not inadvertently hindering the community's move toward sustainability. For example, many communities have an ordinance that makes it illegal to have a lawn over eight inches in height. This type of ordinance can inadvertently prevent a landowner from installing a native grass lawn that could be more ecologically sound. Therefore, review and modify the ordinance to reflect the principles of sustainability.
 - b. Review and update development review procedures so that they do not inadvertently hinder integration of sustainable principles into the development proposal. Sometimes sustainable approaches to development are new to a community and may require extra time and effort for the community to review. However, excessive review time and costs may discourage developers from proposing a sustainable approach to the development. Therefore, consider opportunities to balance the costs and time associated with sustainable





development so that developers are able to propose innovative sustainable developments.

- c. Identify incentives that may help promote sustainable development and actions. For example, consider reducing parking requirements for a development that has a qualified ride share program or a bike or walk to work program.
- d. Where appropriate consider providing financial incentives to support sustainable development with the understanding that sustainable development will benefit the community as a whole.

General Actions

The following general actions have been identified as key steps to allow the Joint Planning District to move toward the goals for this Best Practice Area that were not selected as “initiatives” above.

- I. Develop sustainability indicators to ensure sustainability goals are met. Adjust policies and actions as needed.
- II. To the maximum extent possible, promote sustainable actions through voluntary measures, but use regulations as needed.
- III. Enact expenditure policies that require the consideration of sustainable products and actions.

