

The 1998 Sustainability Accords

Preamble

This document sets forth a vision shared by members of the Thomas Jefferson Sustainability Council. Although we represent six distinct localities and a diversity of backgrounds and viewpoints, we agree on the need to ensure a sustainable future for this Region. The following principles, goals, and objectives were developed by the Council as a working definition of sustainability. Together with the indicators and benchmarks, they provide a set of tools which local governments, businesses and industries, community groups and individual citizens can use to measure progress toward that ideal.

In its work the Council has been motivated by an appreciation for the special history and character of this place, the wealth of its natural endowment, and its ability to provide for an extraordinary range of human needs. We also recognize that this Region and its communities must contend with the challenge of population growth, with social and economic pressures from within and outside the region, with rapid technological change and other factors that place its natural and human systems under stress. Still, we believe it is possible to create a future that is healthy, prosperous, and just; and that the alternative to a sustainable future is an unsustainable one in which both nature and community are at risk.

Several basic assumptions have guided the preparation of this document:

- * that sustainability implies responsibility for life in all its forms *as well as* respect for human work and aspirations
- * that all members of this community have a shared future: we are dependent on each other in ways that are both complex and profound
- * that the ideals of preservation and protection on the one hand, and of economic vitality and opportunity on the other, are not in conflict: in a sustainable future, they are linked together
- * that communities can assume control of their destinies and by their own intention become stronger, healthier, more livable places
- * and finally, that our ability to see the needs of the future is limited. Therefore, any attempt to define sustainability should remain as open and flexible as possible

The Council sees its work as merely a beginning. To be fully successful, it must be subject to continual revision. In that spirit, we submit this document to the citizens of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District. We hope it will be of help in the task ahead.

1. ORIGIN OF THE SUSTAINABILITY COUNCIL

The Thomas Jefferson Sustainability Council is a 34-member council created by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission with representatives from the six member localities Albemarle, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, and Nelson Counties and the City of Charlottesville. The Council grew out of the Thomas Jefferson Study to Preserve and Assess the Regional Environment (TJSPARE).

TJSPARE (1990-1992) was a study designed to determine the capacity of the major natural resources of the Region to accommodate future population growth. The study included surface and ground water, plant and animal habitats and parks and recreational areas, historic resources, air quality, and soils and farmed areas; it sought to compare the projected build-out of the region with the carrying capacity of these resources.

TJSPARE was composed of two parts. The first focused on science oriented analyses in each of the resource areas. The Regional Build-Out Analysis; Ground Water Studies for Greene, Louisa, and Nelson Counties; and Cultural Resources Studies in Nelson and Fluvanna were products of this phase. In some resource areas study were developed but lacked funding to complete the investigations. The second part of TJSPARE consisted of developing a grassroots coalition representative of a diversity of community interests, including environmental and business perspectives, to explore and promote the concept of sustainable growth in the region.

II SCOPE OF WORK

The Thomas Jefferson Sustainability Council was created in 1994 by the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission. The diverse group of farmers, business people, foresters, environmentalists, developers and elected officials was given the charge to “describe a future where our economic, human, social, and environmental health are assured.”

The Council has developed over the last four years a mission statement, a delineation of the Principles which govern a sustainable community, and the Goals, Objectives, and Indicators and Benchmarks of a sustainable region. Its mission, “to provide information and encouragement to citizens throughout the region to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” stresses the importance of taking the long view and the interdependence of all aspects of a community.

The Council addressed the areas of: human population, basic human needs, economic development, transportation, land development, waste, values/ethics, community awareness, interdependence/balance, government, natural environment, and agriculture/forestry. Council members convened working groups, which included members of the public with expertise in each of these areas to help craft the Goals, Objectives and Indicators of sustainability.

III PRINCIPLES, GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND INDICATORS

At intervals throughout the study period, the Council sought wider public involvement through a series of forums. Participation grew until 400 people attended the final forum on Indicators: “Toward a Sustainable Future II.” The comments and suggestions of the public were incorporated in each stage of the Council’s work.

The Indicators and Benchmarks, the most specific aspect of the overall study, are designed to illustrate measurable long-term trends in each area and to point out the degree to which these trends are proceeding in a direction that is unhealthy or

unsustainable for the region over the long term. They were selected in part because of their ability to be measured and the availability of data. The process also made clear the importance of continuing data analysis over time, and in some cases, the need for additional data collection.

IV ACCORDS

The 1998 Sustainability Accords are both a first step and a final produce. The fifteen statements were distilled from a far larger set of objectives and concerns, using two criteria: the urgency or immediacy surrounding the objective and the degree to which it is related to the other objectives. Highest priority was assigned to those objectives for which reliable, factual information could be obtained. These data allow for the measurement of trends, either toward or away from sustainability. While they may seem familiar, or even expected, the Council believes they are especially relevant at this time to the sustainability of the economy, the natural environment, and quality of life in the region.

Taken together, the Accords create an agenda on which the community can agree. Taken individually, each one provides an opportunity for individual and community action toward sustainability for the region.

As individuals, organizations, and communities we can work to decrease risks to the most valuable and vulnerable aspects of the quality of life for all our region. As a community we will come together in a few years to see how we are doing and how the priorities should change.

The Accords offer every citizen the opportunity to participate in creating a more sustainable community and in passing on resources undiminished to generations to come. We invite all members of the community to join us. Make sustainability a reality.

Goals, Objectives, and Measurements of Progress

HUMAN POPULATION

Goal: Population growth and change throughout the Region (and in its separate localities) are managed in ways that enhance the overall quality of life and that support the other goals of sustainability.

Objectives

1. To maintain a human population size that does not reduce the sustainability of the Region.

To be measured by overall population growth and distribution, annual growth rates, and the percentages of growth attributable to natural increase and in-migration.

2. To maintain a human population distribution that does not reduce the sustainability of the Region.

To be measured by the distribution of population among localities and land use (zoning) classifications within the Region.

3. To maintain a population composition that does not reduce the sustainability of the Region.

To be measured by the distribution of population according to age, race/ethnicity, income/personal wealth, education, and employment status.

4. To establish and maintain fair, effective policy mechanisms to manage these population dynamics.

To be measured by the ways population growth and distribution are addressed in local Comprehensive Plans; and by individual citizens' understanding of population dynamics, including human fertility.

HUMAN BASIC NEEDS

Goal: The levels of nutrition, clothing, housing, health, education, security, transportation, employment opportunities, and justice available to all members of the

community are sufficient to maintain the long-term well-being of the community as a whole.

Objectives

5. To ensure that every member of the community can obtain adequate daily nutrition.

To be measured by increases or decreases in the use of nutritional assistance programs, such as Meals on Wheels, Food Bank, School Lunch programs, etc.

6. To ensure that every member of the community can obtain adequate clothing.

To be measured by increases or decreases in the use of non-commercial clothing assistance programs, such as Salvation Army, etc.

7. To ensure that every member of the community can obtain adequate housing.

To be measured by changes in established waiting lists for housing, and by the number of houses with substandard plumbing.

8. To ensure that every member of the community can achieve optimal health.

To be measured by factors such as infant mortality, access to medical and dental care, the availability of health education, and the need for certain types of medical assistance, such as treatment for malnutrition.

9. To ensure that every member of the community has access to education that will allow his or her potential to be fully realized.

To be measured by grade reading levels and by the percent of high school graduates going on to further education and training.

10. To ensure that every community in the Region has access to education and law enforcement programs that enhance its safety and security.

To be measured by the "Part I Crime Index."

11. To ensure that every member of the community has access to adequate and affordable transportation that allows other basic needs--employment, health care, education, etc.--to be obtained.

To be measured by the average length and type of commute required to reach essential services.

12. To ensure that every member of the community is able to obtain employment that offers just compensation, fulfillment, and opportunities for advancement.

To be measured by the number and distribution of jobs in relationship to trends in population growth; by unemployment rates in each locality; by wage and salary levels and disparities within the Region; and by the number and percent of people involved in job training programs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Goal: Each locality in the Region benefits from diverse and appropriately scaled economic development that conserves and protects natural resources, ensures ample employment opportunities, and enhances Region-wide prosperity.

Objectives

13. To enhance community understanding of the relationship between industrial economy and the larger natural system of energy and resource exchange.

To be measured by changes in median income and wealth per capita in the Region, using the Standardized System of National Accounts to measure value for produced and natural assets.

14. To encourage strong, flexible, and durable local markets for locally produced goods and services.

To be measured by trends in the success rate of new businesses in the Region, and by the value of locally produced goods and services produced in the Region each year.

15. To establish and maintain a diverse mix of small and large-scale businesses and industries that operate sustainably.

To be measured by the percent of total employment in small and large business categories.

16. To achieve a current flow of savings within the Region that will lead to a sustainable economic future.

To be measured by total savings and by the ratio of overall savings to income in the Region.

TRANSPORTATION

Goal: People, goods & services, and information move efficiently throughout the Region, in integrated systems that minimize adverse impacts on communities and the natural environment.

Objectives

17. To construct a network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities within urban areas in accordance with the localities' Bicycle Plans.

To be measured by linear miles of facilities constructed especially for pedestrian and bicycle use.

18. To connect urban, suburban, and rural areas with bikeways and walkways.

To be measured by linear miles of facilities constructed especially for pedestrian and bicycle use.

19. To enhance the safety of residential areas by reducing the volume and speed of automobile and truck traffic in these areas.

To be measured by linear miles of traffic "calmed" roads and streets.

20. To reduce single-occupancy automobile trips within the Region by developing attractive and economical mass transit alternatives.

To be measured by trends in the number of automobile trips per capita per day; and by the number and percent of people using various forms of transportation.

21. To reduce single-occupancy automobile trips into and out of the Region by developing attractive and economical transit alternatives.

To be measured by trends in the number of automobile trips per capita per day; and by the number and percent of people using various forms of transportation.

22. To increase tonnage loads for long-haul alternative freight service into and out of the Region.

To be measured by the overall tonnage and percent of freight movement into and out of the Region carried by various forms of transportation.

23. To assess the costs of traffic congestion as a prelude to planning for new transit systems.

To be measured by the average travel time for auto, rail, and bus transportation along selected, representative routes.

24. To calculate the percent of local, state, and federal transportation funding spent on transit systems, in support of more informed transportation decision-making.

To be measured by the overall expenditures and by the percent of federal, state, and local expenditures in each transportation mode.

LAND DEVELOPMENT

Goal: Building is concentrated in Charlottesville and established village centers (also called growth areas), and sustainability is considered in all land use planning decisions.

Objectives

25. To maximize the use and re-use of developed land by clustering and integrating, to the fullest extent practicable, business, industry, housing, recreation, and green space.

To be measured by the location of new development; by the percent of employees in the Region who walk or bike to work; and by how fully the goals and principles of sustainability are incorporated into local zoning ordinances and comprehensive plans.

26. To design current developments in such a way as to preserve as many options as possible for the use and re-use of developed land, as well as for the interconnection of the site and adjoining land in the future.

To be measured by the number of miles of bikeway, walkway, and low-speed road connections between neighborhoods, schools, and services.

27. To define and incorporate the concept of appropriate scale in all development and land use decisions.

To be measured by the average width of neighborhood streets; and by the number of miles of walkway, bikeway, and low-speed road connections between neighborhoods, schools and services.

28. To develop alternative transportation systems that are convenient, economical, efficient, dependable, safe, and non-polluting.

To be measured by the number and percent of people employed in the Region who use modes of transportation other than single-occupancy vehicles.

Goal: Sustainability is an important consideration in all building decisions.

Objectives

29. To use renewable energy sources, resource-efficient principles of design and construction, and sustainably produced materials in all new structures; and to encourage conversion from less efficient, non-renewable energy uses in existing structures.

To be measured by the use of locally generated construction materials, renewable energy sources, and the percent of new and existing buildings certified according to generally accepted sustainable building standards.

30. To decrease the use of automobiles and at the same time improve public access to information by encouraging widespread use of information technology.

To be measured by the percent of the Region's employees who telecommute; and by the number of publicly accessible Internet terminals per thousand people.

WASTE

Goal: The wasteful use of resources and the creation of unrecyclable waste by-products are reduced and, wherever possible, eliminated.

Objectives

31. To increase recycling of usable materials.

To be measured by the volume of solid waste landfilled per capita each year; by the volume of usable materials entering landfills; and by the volume of mature compost generated in the Region.

32. To minimize the use and unsafe disposal of hazardous material.

To be measured by the volume of hazardous waste collected for disposal at designated sites, and by the volume of man-made, toxic, and/or non-biodegradable compounds used or produced in the Region.

33. To promote a sense of individual responsibility for limiting waste.

To be measured by public participation in recycling efforts, and by the number of tickets issued each year for littering.

34. To increase individual and cooperative efforts to reduce waste.

To be measured by business participation in new and established recycling efforts.

35. To increase the understanding and practice of the six-step approach to waste reduction: rethink, reduce, reuse, buy recyclables, recycle, and material exchange.

To be measured by the number of people who grocery-shop with reusable bags.

36. To use water efficiently.

To be measured by per capita water use; by gallons of water recycled in manufacturing processes throughout the Region; and by the annually revised estimate of the "lifetime" of the water supply based on usage trends.

VALUES AND ETHICS

Goal: The diversity and the inherent dignity and worth of all living things are fully appreciated; and societal benefits and costs are equitably shared by all citizens.

Objectives

37. To create conditions that promote a healthy balance of wealth, power, and privilege.

To be measured by the gap between incomes of the rich and poor, and by the extent to which community leadership (elected and appointed) reflects the Region's overall diversity.

38. To foster the use of conflict resolution tools in public and private disputes.

To be measured by the ratio between the numbers of successfully mediated conflicts and of those requiring litigation in a representative area—divorce, e.g.

39. To create conditions which encourage institutions to evaluate their ethical responsibilities.

To be measured by the number of institutions with an adopted code of ethics.

Goal: All members of the community have an opportunity to understand the principles and benefits of sustainability.

Objectives

40. To encourage education and media coverage of sustainability, with a particular emphasis on local issues and individual concerns.

To be measured by the number of sustainability-related courses and training programs serving elected and appointed officials and the general public; and by the number of local articles and news features focused on sustainability.

INTERDEPENDENCE/BALANCE

Goal: Vital links between the Region's urban and rural communities create a fair distribution of costs and benefits, strengthening each community and the Region as a whole.

Objectives

41. To enhance the economic interdependence of urban and rural areas within the Region.

To be measured by the balance between productivity and sales and tax revenue generated in these areas, and by tangible evidence of economic cooperation among localities.

42. To encourage a healthy environmental linkage of urban and rural areas throughout the Region.

To be measured by relative urban and rural population densities, and by the availability and use of Transferable Development Rights.

43. To encourage a healthy social and political interdependence between the Region's urban and rural areas.

To be measured by evidence of regional cooperation and planning; and by individual participation in organizations, activities, and events across jurisdictional lines.

Goal: The negative impact of this Region on the sustainability of other regions worldwide is minimized.

Objectives

44. To encourage acceptance of responsibility for this Region's impact on other regions' social, economic, environmental, and political health.

To be measured by the number of businesses that are ISO-14001-certified, and by an analysis of this region's "ecological footprint".

45. To increase the use of renewable energy resources.

To be measured by growth or decline in alternative energy use as a percent of total energy use.

46. To increase the efficiency of energy use.

To be measured by per capita energy consumption.

47. To assess the immediate, long-term, and cumulative costs and benefits of major public and private-sector decisions, especially in land-use and development, economic policy, and resource consumption.

To be measured by the use of long-term, comprehensive, and full-cost accounting methods.

GOVERNMENT

Goal: Governmental decisions are made in an environment that promotes widespread, informed, and civil public participation.

Objectives

48. To increase civic participation and individual involvement in neighborhoods and community organizations.

To be measured by membership in selected organizations and associations; by voluntary public service; and by local charitable giving.

49. To involve individuals more fully in government.

To be measured by voter registration and participation; by attendance at local public hearings; and by a survey of attitudes toward government.

50. To promote recognition that the long-term welfare of human and natural communities may require individual sacrifice and self-restraint.

To be measured by the long-term vision (20 years or greater) expressed in local Comprehensive Plans.

51. To improve the ways government plans for and provides needed services and infrastructure.

To be measured by a survey of public opinion regarding the quality and availability of government services.

52. To create and maintain a tax system that is equitable, progressive, efficient, and either neutral or beneficial in its impact on sustainability.

To be measured by an analysis of all sources of tax revenue in light of this objective.

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Goal: The long-term integrity of ecosystems and their component parts (air, water, soil, biota) is protected and, wherever possible, restored.

Objectives

53. Ensure that water quality and quantity in the Region are sufficient to support its human population and ecosystems.

To be measured by trends in water use, surface and groundwater supplies, and diversity of aquatic organisms; and by standard water-quality indicators (sediment, dissolved oxygen, etc.).

54. To preserve the habitat required to maintain viable plant and animal populations representative of the Region's overall biological diversity.

To be measured by population trends for indicator species; by the size and type of available vegetative cover; and by the "Habitat Suitability Index."

55. To ensure that air quality does not negatively affect the Region's biological and geological resources.

To be measured by the volume of airborne toxins released annually; by changes in ozone levels; and by net oxygen production.

56. To ensure that soil loss does not exceed inputs from redeposition and new soil forming processes.

To be measured by changes in the net soil loss rate.

57. To maintain natural areas which serve the spiritual, social, and economic needs of the Region's human communities.

To be measured by overall acres of land not subject to extractive or damaging human uses.

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY

Goal: Systems of agriculture and forestry in the Region are economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable. A sustainable system of agriculture or forestry is defined by:

- 1) Economic viability of agriculture/forestry and the rural community.**
- 2) Education of the consumer and producer of agricultural/forestry products**
- 3) Stewardship of the land and the environmental health of its resources**
- 4) Recognition on the part of producers and consumers that economic, environmental, and social conditions are linked.**

Objectives

58. To achieve a full spectrum of local, national, and international marketing for local agricultural and forest products.

To be measured by median profits of individual farms in the Region per annum; by the value of local agricultural and forest products used locally; and by the value of these products exported from the Region.

59. To promote direct farm sales of locally produced agricultural products.

To be measured by gross proceeds of direct farm sales per annum, and by the removal of legal impediments to direct farm sales.

60. To encourage the development of local businesses and industries that create finished goods from local agricultural and forestry products and by-products.

To be measured by gross sales per annum of local value-added goods made with local agricultural and forest products.

61. To make buying locally a more convenient and available option for consumers of agricultural and forest products.

To be measured by the percentage of locally produced agricultural and forest products bought locally.

62. To retain farmland for the future.

To be measured by the size and type of farms in each locality; by participation in ag/forestry district and land use assessment programs; by the use of open-space and conservation easements; and by the number of farmland acres lost each year to other uses.

63. To promote the use of farming practices that combine cost efficiency and environmental stewardship.

To be measured by the percent of farms using soil conservation practices.

64. To broaden the practice of sustainable forestry among loggers and landowners. Sustainable forestry is defined as including

1) Prompt reforestation after logging.

2) Maintenance or reestablishment of mixed species stands on forest lands wherever feasible.

3) Protection of water quality during timber harvesting and all uses of forested areas,

4) Stewardship of wildlife habitat for all native game and non-game species.

5) Practices that minimize the visual impact of timber harvesting on scenic viewsheds.

6) Maintenance or improvement of areas having special biological, geological, or historical significance.

7) Recognition and promotion of the role of forests in maintaining biodiversity.

To be measured by total forest acres in the Region and percentage of the total in each age classification, and by acreage of forest land in public and private ownership.

65. To maintain or improve, wherever possible, the quality and long-term productivity of timber for use as wood products.

To be measured by the ratio of annual harvests to net growth; by the value added to forest products through local manufacturing; and by direct or indirect employment in the forestry sector.

66. To encourage local governments to identify the areas best suited for forestry and use local planning and land use tools as well as fiscal policy to retain these areas for the future.

To be measured by acres included in ag/forestry districts, and by forest acres under conservation easements.

67. To provide forest-related recreational, educational, and tourism opportunities.

To be measured by the number of visitor days and total dollars spent in forest-related recreation, education, and tourism.

68. To increase public understanding of the importance of managing and protecting forest resources.

To be measured by the number of school programs conducted by the Virginia Department of Forestry each year.