

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Sustainability is defined as the ability to “meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The three components of a sustainable community are a prosperous economy, a quality environment and social equity. As stated in the introduction to the General Plan, Union City’s vision to be a “Prosperous and Compassionate City” is a major theme that is supported by the Economic Development Element and Youth, Family, Seniors, and Health Element. This Element focuses on environmental sustainability, which seeks to minimize the impact of daily activities on the natural environment in order to preserve and improve the quality of life available to current and future generations.

Sustainability is a global issue of increasing urgency. The public’s awareness of climate change has dramatically increased the need to create sustainable communities. Union City has the ability to become more environmentally sustainable by reducing its ecological footprint.

The General Plan has several sections related to achieving environmental sustainability. The Community Design Element provides for the restoration of impacted environmental resources, such as the City’s creek system, hillside area, and salt marshes. The Transportation Element promotes biking, walking, and the use of public transit. The Health and Safety Element strives to protect air quality by minimizing emissions of air pollutants. The Natural and Historic Resources Element prioritizes the preservation of the City’s open space as well as biological and water resources. The Public Facilities and Services Element aims to conserve natural resources by reducing the waste stream and conserving water.

While these other Elements contain goals, policies, and implementation programs that promote environmental sustainability, this Element focuses the City’s vision to be more environmentally responsible. The Element provides a comprehensive policy framework to guide the City’s green efforts and provide a foundation upon which to build future programs and practices.

The City will act as a leader, facilitator, and educator within the community to promote resource conservation, pollution prevention, and waste reduction. In particular, Union City has many opportunities to be more sustainable in the areas of business, design, and transportation. This Element highlights the importance of involvement from all members of the community including residents, business owners, and developers. Together, we can effectuate change and ensure that Union City will be a healthy community for future generations.

A. GENERAL

Goal	To make Union City a sustainable community and a regional model.
ES-A.1	

Policies

- ES-A.1.1 The City shall seek participation from residents, businesses, developers, and community organizations in an effort to make Union City sustainable.
- ES-A.1.2 The City shall encourage the incorporation of sustainable practices in private and public development.
- ES-A.1.3 The City shall promote sustainability through public education and outreach efforts.
- ES-A.1.4 The City shall form partnerships within the Bay Area and Tri-City area to unify efforts for a more sustainable region.
- ES-A.1.5 The City shall expand the use of renewable resources and conserve non-renewable resources for future generations.
- ES-A.1.6 The City shall modify or add sustainability programs and policies as new technologies emerge.

Goal To reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.
ES-A.2

Policies

- ES-A.2.1 The City shall participate in regional efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- ES-A.2.2 The City shall participate in the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) Climate Protection Project which assists cities in reducing citywide greenhouse gas emissions.
- ES-A.2.3 The City shall encourage energy conservation and the use of alternative energy sources within the community.
- ES-A.2.4 The City shall seek to reduce vehicle emissions citywide.

Implementation Programs

- ES-A.1 The City shall establish an interdepartmental green action team to facilitate and implement sustainable programs and practices.

Responsibility:

City Manager's Office
Economic & Community Development Department

Timeframe:

FY 07-08

ES-A.2 The City shall quantify citywide greenhouse gas emissions, set a reduction goal, identify and implement measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and monitor progress on an ongoing basis.

Responsibility:

City Manager's Office
Economic & Community Development Department

Timeframe:

FY 07-08, Ongoing

ES-A.3 The City shall coordinate with other cities and outside agencies including, but not limited to, the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), StopWaste.Org, Build It Green, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), Alameda County Water District (ACWD), Union Sanitary District (USD), East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), and the New Haven Unified School District (NHUSD) to implement sustainable development programs.

Responsibility:

City Manager's Office
Economic & Community Development Department

Timeframe:

Ongoing

ES-A.4 The City shall evaluate land use regulations for consistency with sustainable models of development including, but not limited to, Smart Growth and Ahwahnee principles.

Responsibility:

Economic & Community Development Department

Timeframe:

Ongoing

ES-A.5 The City shall track the effectiveness of implementing sustainability programs and provide an annual update to the Planning Commission and City Council with quantified data where possible.

Responsibility:

Economic & Community Development Department

Timeframe:

Ongoing

B. GREEN GOVERNMENT

The City government, as a local agency, will act as a leader and educator to promote sustainability in Union City. The City can demonstrate its firm commitment to sustainability by establishing standards for environmental performance for existing and new civic buildings, landscapes, and facilities. This section highlights the City's intent to consider sustainability in its own actions and operations as well as to educate citizens on how to incorporate sustainable practices into daily living.

Goal To make Union City government more environmentally responsible.
ES-B.1

Policies

- ES-B.1.1 The City shall consider sustainability in its decisions and actions in order to minimize the City's ecological footprint.
- ES-B.1.2: The City shall require that public building and landscaping projects be designed to be energy and resource efficient and reduce operating and maintenance costs.
- ES-B.1.3: The City shall renovate existing public facilities for improved environmental performance.
- ES-B.1.4: The City shall incorporate sustainable practices for ongoing maintenance and operations of public facilities.
- ES-B.1.5: The City shall make public outreach and education programs that promote sustainability a priority.

Implementation Programs

- ES-B.1 The City shall implement an environmentally preferable purchasing policy to promote resource conservation and energy efficiency.

Responsibility:
Administrative Services Department with participation of all City Departments
Timeframe:
FY 07-08
- ES-B.2 The City shall establish a purchasing policy requiring that only clean air vehicles be purchased when new vehicles are required whenever feasible.

Responsibility:
Public Works Department with participation of all City Departments
Timeframe:
Ongoing
- ES-B.3 The City shall develop and implement best practices to promote sustainability in its daily operations and seek to be certified as a green business.

Responsibility:
All City Departments
Timeframe:
Ongoing

ES-B.4 The City shall provide resources and guidelines to employees and citizens on how to incorporate sustainable practices into daily life through the City website and outreach events such as an environmental fair.

Responsibility:
 City Manager’s Office
 Economic & Community Development Department
 Timeframe:
 Ongoing

ES-B.5 The City shall perform energy audits of existing civic facilities and infrastructure and shall incorporate upgrades to improve environmental performance where feasible.

Responsibility:
 Public Works Department
 Timeframe:
 FY 08-09

ES-B.6 The City shall establish design guidelines and standards for public projects to incorporate green building and landscaping measures and shall periodically evaluate increasing environmental performance standards for new public building and landscaping projects.

Responsibility:
 City Manager’s Office
 Economic & Community Development Department
 Timeframe:
 Ongoing

C. GREEN BUSINESS

This section encourages commercial, industrial, and institutional businesses to adopt practices that conserve natural resources, prevent pollution, and reduce waste. The City will encourage businesses to participate in the Alameda County Green Business Program and will seek to attract eco-friendly businesses to the community.

Goal	To encourage the business community to become more environmentally responsible.
ES-C.1	

Policies

ES-C.1.1 The City shall promote the adoption of sustainable business practices by local businesses.

ES-C.1.2 The City shall seek to attract green industries to the community.

ES-C.1.3 The City shall establish public-private partnerships to implement sustainability initiatives and programs.

Implementation Programs

ES-C.1 The City shall encourage participation in the Alameda County Green Business Program by including program information in business license applications, hosting outreach events, and coordinating with the Chamber of Commerce.

Responsibility:
Economic & Community Development Department
Timeframe:
Ongoing

ES-C.2 The City shall provide incentives for certified green businesses in the community through actions such as listing green businesses on the City website, hosting recognition ceremonies for businesses that achieve certified green business status, and providing award certificates.

Responsibility:
Economic & Community Development Department
Timeframe:
Ongoing

ES-C.3 The City shall create and distribute resources and guidelines to educate local businesses on how to incorporate green practices such as energy efficiency, environmentally preferable purchasing, and waste reduction in their day to day activities.

Responsibility:
Economic & Community Development Department
Timeframe:
Ongoing

D. GREEN DESIGN

Union City can create a more environmentally sustainable community by incorporating green measures into the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of buildings and landscapes within the city. Green measures include promoting development that encourages resource conservation, energy efficiency, and waste reduction. Sustainable building and landscaping practices can preserve and protect the natural environment, reduce the lifecycle cost of operations and maintenance, and contribute to the health and productivity of residents and workers.

Goal	
ES-D.1	To encourage sustainable site design, building, and landscaping practices in all development.

Policies

- ES-D.1.1 The City shall encourage site design and landscaping that respects the relationship between the built and the natural environment by minimizing the environmental impacts of development on local and regional ecosystems.
- ES-D.1.2 The City shall encourage new developments to be sited to respond to climatic conditions, such as solar orientation, wind, and shadow patterns.
- ES-D.1.3 The City shall encourage the incorporation of green building practices, technologies, and strategies into development projects.
- ES-D.1.4 The City shall encourage retrofits of existing buildings to promote energy efficiency and indoor air quality.
- ES-D.1.5 The City shall promote tree preservation and planting citywide.
- ES-D.1.6 The City shall promote the use of alternative energy sources.

Implementation Programs

- ES-D.1 The City shall develop guidelines on sustainable building and landscaping practices to help developers and homeowners identify possible options to improve the energy efficiency and environmental performance of their projects. The guidelines shall be reviewed periodically to ensure that they continue to reflect current technologies and practices.

Responsibility:
Economic & Community Development Department
Timeframe:
Ongoing
- ES-D.2 When reviewing development projects, the City shall suggest ways for applicants to incorporate sustainable site design, building, and landscaping practices.

Responsibility:
Economic & Community Development Department
Timeframe:
Ongoing

ES-D.3 The City shall expand tree planting requirements for private development projects and increase penalties for unauthorized tree removal.

Responsibility:

Economic & Community Development Department

Public Works Department

Timeframe:

FY 07-08 and FY 08-09

ES-D.4 The City shall make sustainability a priority in development agreements.

Responsibility:

Economic & Community Development Department

Timeframe:

Ongoing

ES-D.5 The City shall evaluate the feasibility of providing incentives for private development projects that incorporate green building practices.

Responsibility:

Economic & Community Development Department

Timeframe:

Ongoing

ES-D.6 The City shall consider requiring green building practices to be incorporated into private development projects by evaluating legal issues, reviewing other communities' ordinances, and working with the building industry and agencies including, but not limited to, StopWaste.Org and the Home Builders Association.

Responsibility:

Economic & Community Development Department

Timeframe:

Ongoing

ES-D.7 The City shall require that amenities or facilities dedicated to the City by private development projects incorporate green measures and be designed to reduce the cost of operations and maintenance.

Responsibility:

Economic & Community Development Department

Public Works Department

Timeframe:

Ongoing

E. GREEN TRANSPORTATION

One of the major challenges to creating a more environmentally sustainable community is reducing automobile dependence. The largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Union City is vehicle exhaust. Although much of Union City is built out, we have remaining opportunities to minimize auto usage by encouraging high-density, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly development. Through development projects, particularly within the Station District area, the City has the ability to promote the use of public transportation, walking, and bicycling and support the creation of new alternatives to driving.

Goal ES-E.1	To facilitate and increase the use of non-automobile forms of transportation.
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Policies

- ES-E.1.1 The City shall evaluate impacts to transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists in development projects including parking and infrastructure improvements.
- ES-E.1.2 The City shall support the expansion of public transit and promote new types of public transportation.
- ES-E.1.3 The City shall promote pedestrian and bicycle safety and amenities through outreach efforts and planning decisions.
- ES-E.1.4 The City shall continue to promote mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented development.

Implementation Programs

- ES-E.1 The City shall modify parking requirements for residential and commercial uses where public transit is readily available to reduce automobile dependence.
- Responsibility:
Economic & Community Development Department
- Timeframe:
FY 08-09
- ES-E.2 The City shall review the adopted standard details for public streets, and modify as necessary, to facilitate biking and walking.
- Responsibility:
Economic & Community Development Department
Public Works Department
- Timeframe:
Ongoing

ES-E.3 The City shall reevaluate land use plans and policies to encourage development patterns that support transit.

Responsibility:

Economic & Community Development Department

Timeframe:

Ongoing

ES-E.4 The City shall work with employers to promote transit and provide on-site facilities that support the use of bicycles as a transportation mode, including, but not limited to, bicycle racks, lockers, and showers.

Responsibility:

Economic & Community Development Department

Timeframe:

Ongoing

ES-E.5 The City shall promote the use of public transportation by publicizing transit information when advertising public meetings and events.

Responsibility:

Economic & Community Development Department

City Clerk

Timeframe:

Ongoing