



Environment Element

A Introduction

discussion

Environmental stewardship is a core value of this Plan, and it plays an integral role in guiding how the City accommodates growth and provides services. There are many ways the City can protect and improve the environment while acting in its roles as a large employer, builder, land owner and regulator. For example, the City can lead by its own behavior in delivering services, operating its facilities and managing its land in an environmentally sustainable manner.

When environmental goals compete with other City goals, such as those related to economic development, the City is committed to giving just consideration to the environmental goals to protect the functions that natural systems can perform and to prevent harmful effects on human health. The City will continue to engage the community about ways in which the City can give consideration to the “precautionary principle,” which generally provides:

“Where threats of serious or irreversible harm to people or nature exist, anticipatory action will be taken to prevent damages to human and environmental health, even when full scientific certainty about cause and effect is not available, with the intent of safeguarding the quality of life of current and future generations.”

This element of the Plan contains broad environmental goals and policies. Some of the Plan’s other elements include goals and policies addressing how environmental values specifically relate to the topics covered in those elements. For instance, the Land Use Element includes policies governing development near environmentally critical areas such as wetlands and stream corridors, and the Transportation Element addresses possible environmental impacts and improvements associated with transportation choices.

goal

EG1 Protect and improve the quality and function of the city’s air, land, and water resources because of their relationship to human health, wildlife and the region’s natural heritage.

policy

E1 Explore ways for City actions and decisions to have positive effects on the natural environment and human health, and to avoid or offset potential negative effects, including those caused by private projects permitted by the City.

**B****Relationship to Economic Development****C****Natural Systems Approach**

goal

- EG2** Maintain a healthy natural environment as central to Seattle's economic development and as a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining family-wage jobs and workers.

goal

- EG3** Use natural systems to maintain and enhance environmental quality by having them perform such functions as cleaning air and water, and controlling storm water runoff.

policies

- E2** Incorporate the improvement of the natural environment into the City's planning efforts and capital development projects. For instance, plan for transportation systems that control impacts on air quality and climate-change, as well as on water pollution and the consumption of fossil fuels.
- E3** Promote sustainable management of public and private open spaces and landscaping, such as by preserving or planting native and naturalized vegetation, removing invasive plants, engaging the community in long-term maintenance activities, and using integrated pest management.
- E4** Strive to protect and retain certain trees and groups of trees that enhance Seattle's historical, cultural, environmental and aesthetic character.
- E5** Maintain the health of natural habitats on private property through a combination of education, incentives and development standards that recognize and promote sound practices by private land owners.
- E6** Create partnerships with organizations in the private sector and engage the community to protect and enhance Seattle's urban ecosystems and habitat.
- E7** Control the impacts of noise, odor, and light, litter, graffiti, junk cars, trash, and refuse in order to protect human health and the livability of the urban environment.

policies

- E8** In order to reduce the financial investment in built infrastructure while controlling the environmental impacts that infrastructure can cause, explore opportunities to restore or productively use the functions that a healthy ecosystem can provide in conjunction with, or as a substitute for, built infrastructure.
- E8.1** Use trees, vegetation, amended soil, bioretention, and other green stormwater infrastructure, where feasible, to manage stormwater runoff and reduce the impacts of development.
- E9** Work to achieve a sustainable urban forest that contains a diverse mix of tree species and ages in order to use the forest's abilities to reduce storm water runoff and pollution, absorb air pollutants, provide wildlife habitat, absorb carbon dioxide, provide shade, stabilize soil, and increase property values.
- E10** Strive to increase the amount of permeable surface and remove unnecessary impervious surfaces.

environment element

B-C

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