

Northern Group Of the Sierra Club Comments on the Santa Fe Sustainability Plan

Thank you for considering our consolidated comments on the Sustainable Santa Fe Plan Draft. The following are our overall comments about mobilizing the business community, land use, and City/County collaboration, followed by our comments on the Guiding Principles and focus areas. We believe that each of the twelve elements of the plan is thoughtful and reflects the insights gained from a thorough review. The same strength can become a liability if the implementation plan doesn't "connect the dots" among the twelve areas and target solutions to similar constituencies.

For example, elements of many of the Plan's twelve focus areas, when combined and marketed to the business community, can accelerate their path to sustainability and increase local economic development. A specific action to support this goal would be to create specific accountability for business mobilization and partner with existing nonprofit initiatives that offer resources for business community mobilization. The applicable actions steps for business mobilization are identified below within the section of the Plan where they are described;

Guiding Principles - 1) Increase the use of clean, alternative energy by, for example, investing in "green tags, 2) increase recycling rates, 3) help educate ...professional associations, business, and industry about global warming pollution 4) provide transportation options such as car pooling

Clean Renewable Energy - 1) Provide assistance to individuals and local businesses to understand existing incentives to installing distributed generation. 2) encouraging private or public/private partnerships to develop small-scale renewable energy and distributed generation projects within the City

Transportation - 1) Encourage carpooling, 2) place bike racks throughout the City

Water Conservation - 1) Expand public outreach and education; 2) expand support of water conversation activities

Solid Waste Reduction - 1) Provide incentives to businesses and other organizations and facilities to reduce the volume of wasted resources, 2) prepare and conduct on-going research and education, 3) explore opportunities to minimize packaging

Education and Outreach - 1) Identify training and education needs within each section of the Plan, 2) direct City support and funding towards educational materials development and training

The Sierra Club CoolBiz program, (beta version web site www.coolbizsantafe), offers the City the opportunity to leverage an existing program as a public/non-profit partnership to jump-start sustainability efforts in the business community. Additionally, appointing a person to "connect the dots" among all the proposed business mobilization actions and work closely with the business community during implementation would create accountability, leverage new and existing resources (i.e. "green collar" training and employment of commercial HERS raters), and increase the likelihood of significant and sustainable change.

Land Use

This document makes one implicit assumption that, if maintained, will ultimately obviate any efforts to create a truly sustainable future for Santa Fe. That assumption is that current patterns of land use will continue.

Sprawling models of development are simply not sustainable due to:

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- ◆ their inherent demands for transportation systems and the energy to run them
- ◆ the cost of providing and maintaining infrastructure and services to ever expanding, geographically dispersed populations.

Nor can any amount of retrofitting and efficiency measures – however well intentioned – offset the massive throughputs necessary to build and maintain sprawling residential and commercial landscapes.

Rather than simply accepting ‘facts on the ground’ that will condemn us to a continually reactive model of change, Santa Fe has the opportunity to completely re-envision and re-design its patterns of land use to become truly green. This plan should move our city toward a ‘clustered’ model of development in which high density mixed-use and mixed-income neighborhoods are created, surrounded by agricultural open space and habitat, and interconnected by clean mass transit.

These ‘resilient communities’ would be characterized by local control and production of vital ‘commons’ that affect community well-being that include water, energy, transportation, food and communications. These ‘in-filled’ neighborhoods will restore affordability due to spreading land costs across far more built space. They will promote economic development as they not only trigger a ‘re-construction boom’, but also attract members of the ‘creative class’ (and the jobs they create!) with alluring landscapes and lifestyles. The concentration of structures and uses will tremendously boost the tax base, while making services delivery significantly easier and more efficient.

The opportunity to deploy ‘green infrastructure’ in these neighborhoods – including water catchment and recycling systems, pervious hard surfaces, distributed clean energy production, greenhouses and edible landscapes, and truly walk able pathways – will save the City large amounts of money both in avoid infrastructure costs, and in reduced mitigation costs.

These efforts can be supported through designating existing areas for high density development, moving from prescriptive to form-based codes, and creating Tax Incremental Districts to help underwrite the transition to true sustainability.

City/County Collaboration

There is scant mention of county awareness and/or participation in these plans. The one place I saw serious mention of working with the county was the section on solid waste, where of course city-county collaboration is already in place. It won't be very useful for the city to be an island of sustainability surrounded by a laissez-faire county. Of course the city has to plan primarily for the things the city itself can implement or encourage within its boundaries, but if it doesn't at the same time work even harder to achieve county collaboration on issues of sustainability then we will continue to see serious sprawl ever further into the county, since there is already very little unused land left in the city (though much that could be made more livable with judicious infill).