

Environmental Action Plan Summary

Vision: The City of Harrisonburg is a community that provides for the short- and long-term social, cultural, and economic needs of its residents while protecting and conserving the natural environment that sustains them.

Overview

The Environmental Action Plan (EAP) serves as a road map for city leaders, staff, and citizens to implement sustainability visions and principles. To-date, the City of Harrisonburg has taken a number of steps to address the quality and care of our natural resource base; however, the latest science indicates that more ambitious actions are required to mitigate the impacts of environmental degradation and the changing climate that will affect our community’s health, economy, and well-being. Implementing policies and incentives for our city will not only address environmental concerns, but will also have many co-benefits, including cost savings, improved health, social equity and justice, and increased quality of life for all residents.

The EAP builds upon existing City programs and strategies, and proposes measures to accelerate advancements and progress in sustainability, of which **economic vitality, environmental protection, and health and well-being** are collectively considered to be critical pieces of achieving sustainability goals (Figure 1). This plan specifically highlights actions that will embolden environmental goals. However, the three pillars of sustainability are not mutually exclusive and the aim is for all current and future strategies to mutually reinforce the vitality of our local economy and the health and well-being of individuals and communities.

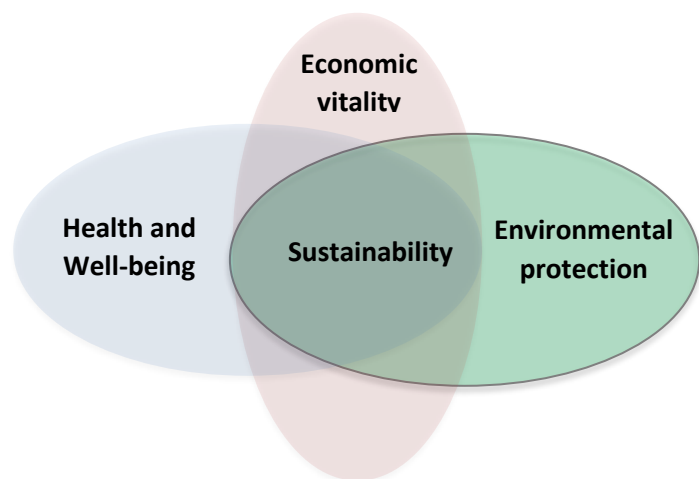


Figure 1. Sustainability diagram.

Action Plan Process and Stakeholders

Members of the Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC), in consultation with city staff and City Council, have led the effort to develop this strategic plan. EPSAC is a commission of appointed volunteers and city staff. The committee was established in 2017 to help the City “create a set of environmental performance and sustainability standards for public and private development and redevelopment projects.” In developing these standards, the committee has examined environmental programs and services currently in place in Harrisonburg, as well as action plans from other cities throughout Virginia and the United States.

The Harrisonburg Environmental Action Plan

The EAP includes goals, objectives, strategies, and co-benefits for the City government and all members of the community. To facilitate assessments of progress toward meeting goals, the EAP outlines **seven key sectors (Table 1)**. These sectors are not mutually exclusive but are separated to help facilitate monitoring of progress.

Within each sector are specific goals, which comprise the core of the community vision and represent what Harrisonburg must achieve in order to become an environmentally sustainable city. This document provides a number of recommended goals (**Table 2**). Specific strategies, including projects, programs, and/or regulations to be adopted by the City and/or community are not specified here, but will be developed in consultation with City staff in the full Environmental Action Plan.

Table 1. The 7 Sector Areas.












	1. Building Standards and Energy Efficiency		5. Sustainable Transportation
	2. Waste Reduction and Recycling		6. Regional Food Systems
	3. Renewable Energy		7. Land Use and Open Space
	4. Stormwater, Water Quality, and Water Conservation		


Table 2. Recommended Goals and Targets for each Sector.

	Building Standards and Efficiency	
GOALS		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Decrease Energy Use Intensity (EUI) of existing city buildings. 2. Increase home buyer and renter demand for higher energy performing homes and living units. 3. Increase the use of renewable energy in the business sector and increase consumer demand for green business practices. 		
TARGETS FOR 2025		TARGETS FOR 2050
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce GHG emissions from city-owned buildings and properties 25% below 2005 levels. • Reduce Energy Use Intensity (EUI) of existing city buildings by 25% using a 2005 baseline. • Create incentive programs that would encourage energy use reductions in residential, commercial, and industrial buildings by 25% using a 2005 baseline. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To be developed</i>

	Waste Reduction and Recycling	
GOALS		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a city wide Zero Waste program for the public and private sectors. 2. Join the Zero Waste International Alliance. 3. Collaborate with other cities across the state to work towards key policy changes to reduce waste and improve recycling throughout Virginia. 		
TARGETS FOR 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve a 35% diversion rate for solid waste. 	TARGETS FOR 2050
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve a 90% diversion rate for solid waste. 		

	Renewable Energy	
GOALS		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support unrestricted development of behind-the-meter solar power by Harrisonburg residents, businesses, schools, and municipal properties. 2. Require that the municipal utility support Harrisonburg’s orderly, timely, and economically fair transition to sustainable energy sources. 		
TARGETS FOR 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the mandate of HEC (“affordable and reliable”) to include renewable energy. 	TARGETS FOR 2050
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% of all electricity should come from renewable sources. 		

	Stormwater, Water Quality, and Water Conservation	
GOALS		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Protect and secure drinking water sources. 2. Protect, maintain, and enhance the wastewater discharge facility. 3. Decrease the volume and amount of pollution in stormwater runoff. 		
TARGETS FOR 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce non-revenue unbillable water use to 10%. • Incentivize reduction of waste water use by residences and businesses by 25%. 	TARGETS FOR 2050
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To be developed</i> 		

	Sustainable Transportation	
GOALS		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide a safe, efficient, accessible, user-friendly, and connected multi-modal transportation network. 2. Continue to coordinate land use and site design decisions among City departments to ensure compatibility with existing City plans that promote walking, cycling, and taking public transportation. 		



Regional Food Systems

GOALS

1. Promote regional sustainable food systems, including access and affordability to all populations in Harrisonburg, particularly children and underserved residents.
2. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with food choices.



Land Use and Open Space

GOALS

1. Strategically conserve and restore natural areas.
2. Increase urban tree canopy in order to increase carbon sequestration and offset greenhouse gas emissions; promote the sustainable removal and reuse of felled trees.
3. Ensure that all City development or redevelopment projects and all plans, policies, and ordinances regarding land use reflect the sustainability vision and principles of the Environmental Action Plan.

Recommendations:

EPSAC recommends that the City Council of Harrisonburg affirm the overall goals of the Environmental Action Plan and adopt Phase I of the Plan which includes the following:

1. Support in principle the goals and targets of the Environmental Action Plan Summary
2. Direct City Staff and City Manager, with EPSAC member assistance, to finalize the Environmental Action Plan within six months
3. Create a Sustainability Coordinator position within fiscal year 2020, or sooner if possible.