

Guidelines for Developing Strategies to Advance Sustainability

[The City of Portsmouth NH Sustainability Committee](#) developed this document to help define its role as a new standing Committee and to identify strategies to meet its responsibilities as defined by [ordinance](#):

“The Sustainability Committee shall provide advice and guidance to the City Council, the City Manager, and City Boards with respect to:

1. Implementation of the Climate Action Plan (CAP), achieving Portsmouth's Renewable Energy Policy, and additional recommendations on increasing energy efficiency, reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and taking measures to build resiliency against climate change.
2. Increasing awareness of sustainable practices among residents, businesses, visitors, municipal staff, and other stakeholders to ensure that Portsmouth remains a leader as an Eco-municipality.
3. Standing for environmental justice while protecting our eco-systems.”

This document includes guidelines that the Committee provides as a tool for the City Council, staff, other Committees, and the public to encourage adoption of sustainability principles and practices to design or modify policies, programs, or decisions; for community adoption; and to evaluate progress. The Committee will invite input from stakeholders to adapt the guidelines as the City's needs and priorities change.

As the Committee articulates its role and “value added,” it is helpful to begin with a definition of Sustainability. In 1987, [the United Nations Brundtland Commission defined sustainability](#) as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainability is advanced through scalable and continuous efforts to improve the balance among the three pillars of sustainability -- Economy, Environment, and Social Equity (the “3 E's”) -- throughout all activities.

Examples of Potential Applications of Guidelines

The following are examples of representative past, current, and future priority activities in Portsmouth where the Committee has collaborated or could collaborate with stakeholders to advance sustainability principles and practices.

- Climate Action Plan – support developing a CAP, and organize community engagement
- Capital Improvement Plan -- develop and evaluate proposed projects, adoption of GHG reduction and other sustainability criteria
- Master Plan Update – develop goals, policies, and community vision
- Redesign of Market Square – identify trade-offs among competing values, develop vision
- Housing Affordability and Choices – identify potential policies, projects, and partnerships
- Waste Reduction and single food service-ware – policies, ordinances, industry partnerships
- Green Buildings – develop policies and ordinances
- Bike Pedestrian Plan Update and Improved Public Transit – encourage shift to more sustainable or green modes, improved and affordable accessibility

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Guidelines for Developing Strategies to Advance Sustainability*

To advance principles and practices of sustainability, the [Portsmouth NH Sustainability Committee](#) encourages City Council members, staff, Committees and Boards, businesses and organizations, residents and households to consider the following guidelines when developing strategies to modify existing or design new policies, programs, and resource decisions. The topics are aligned closely with the [Sustainability Committee's responsibilities](#) and the [2024 Portsmouth Climate Action Plan \(CAP\)](#).

For each proposed strategy, what are Greenhouse Gas (GHG) and climate resilience impacts, does it support implementation of the CAP, and what are the trade-offs between the 3 E's of Sustainability – Economy, Environment, and Social Equity?

- *What is the potential to expand the strategy and accelerate positive results?*
- *How might the strategy be communicated to stakeholders and the public to gain support and encourage community practices?*

1. Evaluate and adapt the ways the strategy supports implementation of the CAP by reducing GHG emissions and strengthening climate resilience.
2. Evaluate the strategy's reliance on non-renewable energy sources and plan for shifts to renewable energy and reduction of energy demand. Estimate GHG impacts and plan to track GHG emissions over-time. Examples are:
 - a. Energy conservation and efficiency, such as shifts to public transit, walking, bicycling, or electric vehicles, and weatherization of buildings.
 - b. Apply or adapt available tools to estimate GHG emission and energy consumption, such as the EPA simplified emissions calculator. Track reductions from household solar installations or shifts to public transit.
3. Design the strategy to address social equity and fairness in distribution of services and benefits and explore ways to improve related impacts.
 - a. Identify ways to address disproportionate climate and other impacts on low-income or other disadvantaged households, such as substandard housing, access to green space and public transit, and barriers to public participation.
4. Evaluate and strengthen the ways the strategy addresses climate resilience and adaptation. For example:
 - a. Reduce removal of trees and expansion of paved surfaces that worsen the effects of hot weather.
 - b. Reduce building where sea-level rise is forecast.
 - c. Anticipate and adapt environments for extended periods of hot weather.
 - d. Limit outdoor work or activities as appropriate.
 - e. Collaborate with the Public Health Department to tailor emergency management plans and preparedness for extreme weather events and power loss (e.g., plan

scenarios, maintain and obtain supplies, train staff). Events could include heat waves, hurricanes, flooding, vector-borne diseases, tornados, drought, ice/snow/extreme cold, wildfires, etc.

5. Assess how the strategy weakens or strengthens the community or has a negative or positive economic impact. Evaluate the effects of not implementing the strategy and proposed actions. Modify the strategy to increase positive results.
6. Assess whether the strategy protects or restores natural resources, including habitats, and explore ways to advance efforts to protect the environment.
7. Evaluate how the program reduces waste, reuses materials, and uses reclaimed materials. Modify to incorporate reduction, reuse, and reclamation of materials as much as possible.
 - a. Avoid single-use plastics and promote reusable containers and composting at workplaces, events, public facilities, and businesses, and by households.
8. Identify ways the strategy conserves water and reduces water consumption and explore ways to further conserve or reduce consumption.
9. Assess immediate and long-range harm and benefits that the strategy produces, as well as other direct or indirect co-benefits.

* Developed by the [Portsmouth New Hampshire Sustainability Committee](#). The Committee will refine the guidelines through user feedback to adapt to the community's changing needs and priorities. Comments or questions should be sent to the [City of Portsmouth Department of Planning and Sustainability](#) and the [Sustainability Committee](#).