



10 SUSTAINABILITY FRAMEWORK

The term “sustainability” can have several meanings depending on local context and priorities. Generally, sustainability includes consideration of three important elements in urban development; local ecology, economic well-being, and social equity. In Gardner, the balance among these three elements is influenced by oil drilling, intermodal distribution and logistics, traditional and contemporary neighborhood development, bicycle trails and greenways, access to basic goods and services, and many other factors. As these urban development issues evolve, the City is also subject to changing climate conditions that will continue to test local infrastructure, energy systems, and consumer behavior.

This chapter highlights recommendations throughout the Comprehensive Plan that reflect sustainable practices, and introduces additional strategies aimed at ensuring Gardner’s long-term viability and attractiveness.



SUSTAINABILITY IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Throughout Chapters 4-9 of this Comprehensive Plan, there are several recommendations related to specific topics that reflect sustainable practices or policies. In fact, one of the Plan's guiding principles,—Managed Growth—speaks to several components of sustainability as it implies development that preserves the natural environment, reduces infrastructure costs, allows for non-motorized connections throughout the community, and enhances access to critical goods and services for residents. The following summary highlights sustainable practices or concepts discussed in previous chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.

LAND USE

- Focus new development in areas easily served by existing infrastructure systems
- Manage new growth through the use of concentrated development patterns and conservation of natural areas
- Use cluster development and conservation design techniques to conserve natural and open space areas for passive recreation and stormwater management
- Encourage local commercial development in new growth areas that minimizes the distance between residents and day-to-day needs
- Strengthen Downtown Gardner in order to support local businesses and reuse important buildings and infrastructure
- Utilize stormwater detention basins as landscaping features
- Ensure oil extraction processes follow applicable state and federal regulations to protect the health of the natural environment

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

- Provide safe and efficient non-motorized networks that reduce reliance on automobiles and increase physical activity
- Improve the safety and efficiency of transportation networks in order to reduce accidents
- Manage the development of transportation infrastructure in order to minimize cost
- Integrate green design techniques into transportation infrastructure design
- Encourage and support regional transit as an alternative for trips to communities throughout Johnson County



PARKS, OPEN SPACE & ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

- Preserve and enhance the City's natural assets such as greenways, wooded areas, Gardner Lake, and the KCPL Prairie Wetland
- Enforce the Gardner Landscape Ordinance to require property owners to maintain and replace trees in order to preserve the City's tree canopy
- Encourage cluster development in order to preserve tree stands within a development site
- Require lake buffers in addition to stream corridor development minimums to allow for natural filtration of runoff before reaching bodies of water

- Require on-site stormwater detention and management to reduce the amount of potentially contaminated runoff through increased permeability and filtration
- Work with property owners and developers to integrate BMPs and green infrastructure strategies including green roofs, bioswales, rain gardens, permeable pavement, and rainwater harvesting and re-use
- Prioritize land acquisition and construction of greenway corridors that follow Kill Creek and other floodways to serve as natural flood mitigation infrastructure and ecological corridors

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Ensure all residents have access to critical public services
- Maximize the efficiency of local government in order to reduce costs without compromising the quality of services
- Provide events and facilities that enable citizens to interact with one another
- Support transparent local government and opportunities for community engagement in policy making
- Ensure the safety of residents and businesses through quality police and fire protection
- Maximize the use of public properties for uses that support the local sense of community
- Ensure the on-going maintenance of existing infrastructure systems
- Expand infrastructure in a logical and cost-effective way
- Integrate green infrastructure techniques into existing and new systems



ADDITIONAL SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

As described previously, sustainable practices are included throughout the previous chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. However, there are additional topics that were raised during the planning process that are more specific, or do not fit appropriately into the discussion of one topic. The following sections include additional sustainability-related recommendation that should be implemented by the City.

LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Gardner has a rich agricultural heritage and is encircled by thriving farmland. This connection to local food production is an opportunity to strengthen the local economy and support healthy lifestyles. The following recommendations describe ways the City can capitalize on this characteristic of the community to create a more sustainable urban environment:

- Encourage local schools, restaurants and grocers to offer locally grown foods for purchase or consumption
- Collaborate with local farmers to reestablish a weekly Gardner Farmers Market that offers fresh local produce to residents
- Continue to support the Gardner Community Garden as a resource for education and community building opportunities
- Amend zoning regulations and work with the owners of undeveloped lots to allow neighborhood-supported urban gardens as an interim use, especially in areas surrounded by residential development or in partially built-out subdivisions.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Residential and commercial buildings account for more than 40% of all energy use in the United States. As a center for industry and distribution, Gardner has several large developments that could offer a significant environmental and cost benefit by integrating private alternative energy systems. The following recommendations describe ways the City can support local energy production in Gardner:

- Integrate alternative energy systems including solar, wind, and geothermal, into all City-owned facilities, wherever feasible, as retrofits to existing structures or as part of new construction
- Amend zoning regulations to allow appropriate solar or wind energy installations for commercial and residential development, considering potential impacts related to noise and aesthetics
- Provide information to property owners regarding the benefits of alternative energy, and maintain a list of local contractors who specialize in alternative energy installations
- Work with industrial property owners and tenants to identify grant funding for the installation of large-scale private alternative energy systems