

Measuring What Matters in Issaquah

Vision and Indicators

Recommendations

Prepared by the
Issaquah Sustainability Sounding Board

to be presented to Mayor Frisinger
March 20, 2009



DEAR MAYOR:

Five months ago, you assembled this diverse panel of 16 community leaders to form the Sustainability Sounding Board with the specific charge to:

- Help shape and form a local vision of sustainability,
- Develop a set of indicators to guide and measure progress, and
- Submit a recommendations report for your consideration.

You were interested in indicators that would connect to existing initiatives, plans and programs; track and report sustainability progress; foster communication and dialogue; and help the City of Issaquah move to the next level in sustainability leadership. You asked us to think creatively about Issaquah's future.

*“Think about the year 2050...will we be more sustainable than we are now?
How will we know we are successful?”*



To consider your questions and carry out the task at hand, the Sounding Board met four times from September 2008 to January 2009. We shared what sustainability meant to us and our community. We reflected on the use of indicators and what makes a good indicator. We evaluated and selected a set of indicators to measure what matters to Issaquah.

Our recommendations are presented here for your consideration. We offer a sustainability vision for the City of Issaquah as well as core principles to help guide City and community actions to achieve sustainability goals. We developed 25 indicators across eight sustainability areas to track progress towards achieving that vision. Finally, our recommendations include a set of 13 keystone indicators that can more effectively communicate progress to the broader Issaquah community.



Thank you for the opportunity to lend our expertise and experience to this effort. As residents, parents, business leaders, educators, policymakers, environmentalists, human service professionals, and stewards, we care deeply about this community and its future. While we have accomplished much in a short time, we understand that this is just the beginning; there is more work to be done. We look forward to strong partnerships to take this work to the next level to achieve the highest possible quality of life for today's citizens and for future generations.

Sounding Board Members

Natalie Cheel	<i>Chief of Staff, Cascade Land Conservancy</i>
Julie Colehour	<i>Principal, Colehour + Cohen</i>
Diana Crane	<i>Sustainability and Communications Director, PCC Natural Markets</i>
Lori Danielson	<i>Issaquah Community Member, Co-founder of Sustainable Issaquah</i>
Leo Finnegan	<i>Member of the Park Board and Human Services Commission</i>
Philip Jacobsen	<i>Issaquah Community Member</i>
Reed Jarvis	<i>Issaquah Community Member</i>
David Kappler	<i>Issaquah City Council Member</i>
Ken Konigsmark	<i>Issaquah Community Member</i>
Barb de Michelle	<i>Board Member of the Greater Issaquah Youth and Family Network & Family Resource Center, member of the Arts Commission</i>
Steve Rasmussen	<i>Superintendent, Issaquah School District</i>
Kelly Richardson	<i>Associate Broker, Rowley Properties</i>
Doug Simpson	<i>Vice President, Issaquah Alps Trails Club</i>
Janet Wall	<i>Issaquah Community Member & member of River and Streams Board</i>
John Williams	<i>Board Chair of Issaquah Valley Community Services and Director of Compassion House</i>
Renee Zimmerman	<i>Executive Director, Issaquah Highlands Council</i>

Project Team

City of Issaquah

Micah Bonkowski	<i>Resource Conservation Coordinator</i>
Mary Joe de Beck	<i>Resource Conservation Coordinator</i>
David Fujimoto	<i>Resource Conservation Office Manager</i>
Trish Heinonen	<i>Planning Manager</i>
Debi Kirac	<i>Senior Planner</i>
Joe Meneghini	<i>Deputy City Administrator</i>
Dan Trimble	<i>Economic Development Manager</i>

Cascadia Consulting Group

Michelle Caulfield	<i>Senior Associate</i>
Marc Daudon	<i>Principal</i>

INTRODUCTION



“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs by considering current and potential economic, environmental and social issues.”

Issaquah Comprehensive Plan (Ord. 2222)

“We are proud to define Issaquah by our environment and open space, and we are also known as a wonderful people place. Sustainability, as we know, is about the interconnection and balance between three basic elements: it’s about the natural environment, our people and our economy. Issaquah is a warm and caring place, a community that opens itself to others.”

Mayor Ava Frisinger

The City of Issaquah is a true sustainability leader in the Pacific Northwest. From the longstanding success of its award-winning Salmon Days Festival to the revolutionary zHome project – a zero-energy, carbon neutral townhome development – Issaquah is pushing the sustainability envelope. For over a decade, the City has not only championed sustainable practices in its own infrastructure and operations, but has reached out to the broader community of residents, businesses, and neighboring jurisdictions to foster greater awareness and actions to reduce environmental impacts and build a more healthy and prosperous future.



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INTRODUCTION

(Continued)



in•di•ca•tor (noun)

1. a thing that indicates a state or level.
2. a gauge or meter of a specified kind.

Building on this longstanding tradition of sustainable action, Mayor Frisinger established the Sustainability Sounding Board, a panel of 16 community leaders charged with defining what sustainability means in Issaquah, crafting a vision, and developing a set of indicators to measure progress towards achieving that vision.

Our report to the Mayor begins with a brief overview of work of the Sounding Board. It then presents our recommendations, which include a sustainability vision and principles, offers 25 indicators across eight sustainability areas, and identifies a subset of 13 keystone indicators. The report concludes with a summary of critical next steps for moving forward.

“My participation in the City of Issaquah’s Sustainability Sounding Board offered a special opportunity to re-examine – through the eyes of a diverse group of informed and passionate people – my personal and professional beliefs and practices as they relate to sustainability, and to contribute to an exciting effort. The individual energy and collective commitment of the Sounding Board members were exciting and inspiring, and truly bodes well for Issaquah’s successful – and sustainable – future.”

Diana Crane
Sounding Board Member

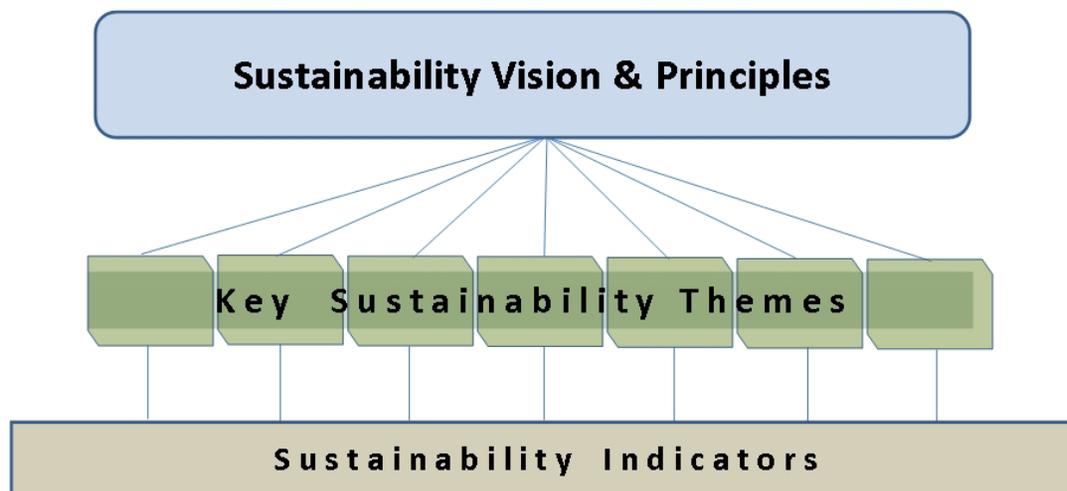
PROCESS

from Vision to Indicators

The Sustainability Sounding Board met four times over the course of five months. Our specific charge was to:

- Help shape and form a local vision of sustainability,
- Develop a set of indicators to guide and measure progress, and
- Recommend sustainability indicators to the Mayor for consideration.

Issaquah Sustainability Framework From Vision to Indicators



“As a representative of Rowley Properties, I truly appreciate being part of this process to help create a vision for Issaquah to attract business and promote economic vitality, enhance Issaquah’s natural environment and provide a caring community. The indicators will encourage and guide business and community leaders to engage in Issaquah promoting sustainable practices. With reduced regulation, appropriate taxation and a diversity of business, Issaquah will have the economic vitality it needs to provide and sustain a healthy community. We recognize the tremendous value of Issaquah’s natural resources and beauty and want to ensure those features will be enjoyed by future generations. Economic vitality is the keynote that will lead us into the future as Issaquah’s citizens can then enjoy and enhance the stewardship of our land, water, forest and air. With this creative vision from the Sounding Board, Issaquah will be a place where individuals can live, work and call, our global and self-reliant community, home.”

Kelly Richardson, Rowley Properties

PROCESS

from Vision to Indicators (Continued)

We began by talking about sustainability – what it meant to us individually and to our community. From this discussion, we organized the full spectrum of sustainability ideas into key themes to help better prioritize and monitor what matters in Issaquah. We then discussed indicators – how they are used and what makes a good indicator. Finally, we evaluated and selected a set of indicators to help Issaquah monitor and communicate how we are doing relative to our aspirations. These activities are described in greater detail below.

Step 1: Define a sustainability vision, themes, and desired outcomes. The first meeting centered on sharing what sustainability meant to us individually and as a community. We identified issues and priorities for making a more sustainable community and organized these into sustainability themes in order to better understand and monitor what matters in Issaquah. City staff and consultants used this information to draft a sustainability framework, which included a vision, core principles and eight sustainability themes.

Step 2: Develop criteria for indicators. In the second meeting, City staff and consultants shared information on indicators including what they are, how they are used, and what makes a good indicator. We explored examples of indicators in everyday use as well as those used by indicator programs. Board members provided input on criteria for evaluating and choosing indicators for Issaquah.

Step 3: Develop and review draft indicators for each thematic area. City staff presented lists of possible indicators for the eight sustainability areas. We spent part of meeting two and most of meeting three and four evaluating indicators and offering specific feedback on improvements, gaps, and whether the indicator would be easily understood by the public.

Overview of 4 Meetings

Meeting 1 (September, 2008)

Vision and Goals

- Sustainability defined
- Sustainability in Issaquah
- Sustainability themes

Meeting 2 (October, 2008)

From Vision to Indicators

- Sustainability framework
- Using indicators
- Good indicators
- Evaluating indicators

Meeting 3 (November, 2008)

Nuts & Bolts of Indicators

- Evaluating indicators

Meeting 4 (January, 2009)

Bringing it All Together

- Evaluating indicators
- Keystone indicators
- Education and Communication
- Next steps

PROCESS

from Vision to Indicators (Continued)

Criteria for Selecting Issaquah Indicators

1. Indicator is a good proxy for a broader trend it represents.
2. Indicator is easy to explain and understand. It may have strong visual or emotional impact.
3. The information is actionable.
4. Reliable data exists for the indicator which may be obtained at reasonable effort and/or cost on a regular basis.
5. Change in the indicator is measurable and meaningful on a reasonable timeframe.
6. Indicator is consistent with City policy and guiding principles.
7. Where appropriate, the indicator format is consistent with or comparable to broader or regional indicators (e.g., King County statistics).

Step 4: Agree on final list of indicators and a smaller set of keystone indicators.

During our final meeting, we reviewed and revised the draft set of recommended indicators. Our final recommendations include 25 indicators that span the broad range of issues important to the Issaquah community as well as a smaller set of 13 keystone indicators to enable the City to more effectively communicate to the broader community.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Measuring What Matters in Issaquah

Our recommendations articulate a future vision for Issaquah as well as a set of principles to guide community plans and actions. They integrate and build on existing vision statements and previous planning efforts such as the Comprehensive Plan, the Economic Vitality Task Force, and the Human Services Commission as well as the expertise and experience of diverse membership of the Sounding Board. Our recommendations provide eight key sustainability themes to better capture Issaquah's priorities and organize the 25 recommended indicators to track our progress. Finally, they offer a smaller set of 13 keystone indicators to more easily communicate sustainability progress to the broader community.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Measuring What Matters in Issaquah (Continued)



*“Issaquah is not “any-town, USA”;
we’re uniquely blessed by natural
surroundings that offer peaceful
beauty, clean air and water, wildlife,
and recreational opportunities.
Sustaining all this, and the quality
and basics of life it provides, is
essential to Issaquah’s future.
For me, sustainability means
responsibly living within our means
and the ecosystem’s natural
carrying capacity to ensure future
citizens can continue to enjoy the
quality of life we do today. That’s
why I wanted to be part of this
process; future generations need to
know we consciously chose to plan
for and take action to sustain the
best of Issaquah for the future.”*

Ken Konigsmark
Sounding Board Member

Sustainability Framework: Vision and Principles

Our vision captures the essence of what sustainability means to Issaquah, offers core principles to guide our plans and actions, and identifies desired outcomes for eight sustainability thematic areas to help organize sustainability priorities and action.

In Issaquah we are striving to achieve the highest possible quality of life for today’s citizens and for future generations. Quality of life means livability - a livable community enjoyed by all where natural resources and the environment are protected, the economy is healthy and vibrant, and citizens are supported, active, and contributing. We recognize that Issaquah is not an island; in order to grow and live sustainably, we must connect to and cooperate with our neighbors. The way we live our lives is a cornerstone of a sustainable Issaquah. Some principles and values to guide us include:

- *Thinking long term*
- *Living within our means*
- *Producing no waste*
- *Being leaders*
- *Being adaptable*
- *Achieving balance*
- *Having processes and practices that are self-correcting*
- *Continually improving how we do things*
- *Maintaining and enhancing equity*
- *Being engaged*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Measuring What Matters in Issaquah (Continued)

Sustainability Outcomes & Indicators

Sustainability is about the interconnectedness of social, economic, and environmental elements. It is less a specific outcome than a means to an end. As highlighted by our sustainability vision and principles, the way we live our lives – at home, at work, and at play – is key to achieving our sustainability goals. Given the integrated nature of sustainability and the fact that being sustainable is a continual process, it can be challenging to measure progress towards a sustainability goal or vision.

For this reason, we developed eight primary sustainability areas with specific outcomes to better define our goals and focus our action and measurement. These themes, which are presented on the following two pages, help to organize our recommended indicators.

Our recommended indicators for each theme are presented beginning on page 11.



“Issaquah is a thoughtful community that will set an example for the entire region as a city that did it right. As one of the first Cascade Agenda Leadership Cities, Issaquah understands the importance of preserving quality of life and the need for careful planning. Taking the initiative to track their progress demonstrates their commitment to being a truly sustainable and vibrant community. Cascade Land Conservancy was honored to be a part of this important process.”

Natalie Cheel
Sounding Board Member

RECOMMENDATIONS

Measuring What Matters in Issaquah (Continued)

Sustainability Themes & Desired Outcomes



1. BASIC NEEDS

In Issaquah, food, shelter, and health care will be available for all. Every citizen will feel safe, supported, and secure. There will be fewer residents in need. There will be ample affordable housing, essential for both living and working.



2. BUSINESS CLIMATE

In Issaquah, our local economy will be healthy and diverse supporting innovation, businesses of all sizes, and arts and culture as well as connecting to the regional and global economy. Business leaders will want to be located in Issaquah.



3. EDUCATION

In Issaquah, our schools will be world class and we will have excellent ongoing education for adults. Citizens will have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills to effectively contribute to the community, environment, and economy through all stages of life.



4. COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND STEWARDSHIP

In Issaquah, people will be actively engaged in activities to improve the quality of life in their communities. Everyone will give something back! All citizens will consider their impacts, and will make decisions leading to less waste, less energy use, and greater support for those in need. Government and citizens will work together to make democratic institutions and systems inclusive, responsive, and transparent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Measuring What Matters in Issaquah (Continued)

Sustainability Themes and Desired Outcomes (Continued)



5. GREEN, COMPACT, AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT

In Issaquah, we will use green building in the urban landscape to minimize our impact. We will carefully manage our growth and keep our footprint the same, even as we grow. We will be able to both live and work in Issaquah. Our dense and centralized development will preserve open space and agriculture and other working lands. Our aspiration: people will work, live, play, and create – closer to home.



6. NATURAL AREAS AND OPEN SPACE

In Issaquah, open spaces will be protected. Our hills will be dominated with conifers as they are today; we will have ample public parks, trails, community gardens, and salmon in our streams. We will have a regional food supply that we can trust and that keeps us healthy.



7. TRANSPORTATION

Issaquah will lead the region by becoming a pedestrian, bike, and transit dominated city. We will have ample public transportation services, bike lanes, and sidewalks to support transportation for all. We will partner with neighboring communities to improve the connectivity of alternative transportation within the region. Our transportation will be carbon-free and use alternative fuels; we will not be reliant on oil or gas.

Alternative transportation means modes of transportation other than the single-passenger motor vehicle, including carpools, vanpools, buses, public transit, walking, and bicycling. **Alternative fuels** replace conventional fuels such as petroleum and coal. They are non-fossil based and include biodiesel, ethanol, and fuel cells.



8. WASTE / RESOURCE USE

In Issaquah, wasting resources will become unthinkable. We will consume less energy and materials and live in such a way that we will not use up our resources. We will replenish what we use.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indicators for Basic Needs

Meeting the basic needs of Issaquah's residents is fundamental to the long-term sustainability of our community. Our citizens need to feel safe and supported through access to quality healthcare, healthy food, and affordable housing. Every citizen should have the opportunity to positively contribute to the community.

Our Desired Outcome: *In Issaquah, food, shelter, and health care will be available for all. Every citizen will feel safe, supported, and secure. There will be fewer residents in need. There will be ample affordable housing, essential for both living and working.*

We recommend the following four indicators to track our progress in achieving our desired outcome for Basic Needs:

- **Community Health:** Percent of residents with health insurance.
- **Community Safety:** Reported property crime rate.
- **Food Bank Use:** Number of unique families served by the food bank per year.
- **Housing Affordability Gap:** Difference between the median income level and median sales price of homes in Issaquah; Number of affordable housing units as a percentage of total housing stock.



We evaluated seven different indicators for tracking basic needs in Issaquah and determined that these four indicators best reflect what is important to us. Highlights from our discussion include:

- Food Bank Use was seen as a good proxy for poverty. Board members thought data were available and that it would be easy to communicate to the public.
- Additional work is needed to determine the right data points to measure Community Safety; property crime was not thought to be enough.
- Housing affordability was seen as a good indicator of how well Issaquah is supplying housing options to its citizens.
- Toxics exposure was suggested as an indicator but more research is needed to determine the best way to measure this community issue. Access to quality drinking water was considered worth tracking in this area.
- Sounding Board members also considered assessing readiness for responding and adapting to major events or catastrophes as another important component of Basic Needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indicators for Business Climate

The health of Issaquah's business climate drives our ability to be prosperous – economically competitive, resilient, and attractive to private and public enterprise. A community with economic vitality enables its citizens to enjoy jobs in balance with a quality of life that sets the standards for long-term sustainability.

Our Desired Outcome: *In Issaquah, our local economy will be healthy and diverse – supporting innovation, businesses of all sizes, and arts and culture as well as connecting to the regional and global economy. Business leaders will want to be located in Issaquah.*

We recommend the following four indicators to track our progress in achieving our desired outcome for a healthy Business Climate:

- **Business Diversity:** Number of businesses in the City by size, ownership location, employment, longevity, and type.
- **Job-Housing Balance:** Ratio of total housing units to jobs in Issaquah.
- **Participation in the Arts:** Attendance at entertainment, cultural, and art events.
- **Revenue Base Diversity:** Total city revenue base by source (local taxes, sales tax, utilities, business license fees, etc).



We evaluated five different indicators for monitoring our business climate and determined that these four indicators measure the most important aspects of economic vitality in Issaquah. Highlights from our discussion include:

- Board members liked the concept of business diversity and employment housing ratio, but wanted to incorporate a values-based approach to business and employment (e.g., good jobs, good wages, clean industry, high tax base). While these data may not be available, they should be incorporated as they become available.
- Board members agreed that Participation in the Arts was easy to understand and that data were available. More work could be done with the Arts Commission to broaden the indicator.
- The Revenue Base Diversity indicator was designed show the durability and breadth of the economy as it will help evaluate changes in distribution and total revenue base over time.
- Board members expressed some concern about explaining and achieving the Job-Housing Balance indicator on a local level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indicators for Education

The quality of education – both formal and community-based – is paramount to each individual’s ability to achieve their goals and positively contribute to a sustainable society. We value our people – at all ages – and believe it is important to invest in education so that citizens feel empowered to enhance the quality of their lives and their community.

Our Desired Outcome: *In Issaquah, our schools will be world class and we will have excellent ongoing education for adults. Citizens will have the opportunity to acquire knowledge and skills to effectively contribute to the community, environment, and economy through all stages of life.*

The Sounding Board had a very good discussion about possible indicators for the education theme, but did not land on a specific set of indicators. The group felt that more work was needed in partnership with education leaders to come up with a reasonable set of indicators to gauge life-long learning and the full spectrum of learning opportunities across the Issaquah community (not just within the school district).



We evaluated more than 10 indicators for monitoring the quality of education in our community and determined that more work was needed to determine the right set of indicators. Highlights from our discussion include:

- Board members noted that there is an abundance of school district data. Further data sifting with the District will be needed to narrow to the best measure(s).
- Board members felt it was important to look at learning within the family and community as the school system only works with students 180 days a year.
- Board members came up with ideas to shape future education indicators such as good schools achieving high test scores, keeping kids in school, and preparing students for the world.
- Some specific indicators suggested included entry level classes taken by Issaquah graduates at state colleges; standardized test scores by graduates; and the community’s ability to meet pre-kindergarten preparation and/or support.
- Board members emphasized the importance of including ongoing and adult education in selecting indicators for this theme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indicators for Community Awareness & Stewardship

Community awareness and involvement in planning, policies, and actions to achieve the highest quality of life in Issaquah is necessary to our success. This social capital is often not captured in economic statistics but has a significant impact on the health of our community.

Our Desired Outcome: *In Issaquah, people will be actively engaged in activities to improve the quality of life in their communities. Everyone will give something back! All citizens will consider their impacts, and will make decisions leading to less waste, less energy use, and greater support for those in need. Government and citizens will work together to make democratic institutions and systems inclusive, responsive, and transparent.*

We recommend the following three indicators to track our progress in achieving an engaged community and a high quality of life in Issaquah:

- **Quality of Life:** Resident perception of quality of life in Issaquah.
- **Volunteerism:** Percentage of residents who volunteer; Percent of residents volunteering and total hours volunteered in City or community programs.
- **Voter Turnout:** Percentage of registered voters who vote in general and local elections; Percentage of eligible voters registered.



We evaluated only these indicators and determined that they adequately reflect community engagement in Issaquah. Highlights from our discussion include:

- Board members felt the two data points for the volunteerism indicator worked well together. They emphasized that volunteerism should include activities from a range of groups such as service organizations, churches, United Way, youth sports, or corporate events.
- Board members cautioned that the quality of life indicator may be difficult to quantify. Survey challenges such as cost, data variability, response bias, cultural and language diversity, and demographics will need to be considered and addressed.
- Board members talked about community connectedness and the importance of linking newer neighborhoods with older neighborhoods. Having a “sense of place” was also mentioned as an important community attribute to monitor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indicators for Green, Compact, & Mixed-Use Development

Growing greener and more compact is a smart growth strategy for Issaquah. Managed growth is key to community sustainability, reducing pollution and resource use and protecting vital habitat, watersheds and natural areas. Integrating residential and commercial uses supports alternative transportation and can foster a vibrant and safe community.

Our Desired Outcome: *In Issaquah, we will use green building in the urban landscape to minimize our impact. We will carefully manage our growth and keep our footprint the same, even as we grow. We will be able to both live and work in Issaquah. Our dense and centralized development will preserve open space and agriculture and other working lands. Our aspiration: people will work, live, play, and create – closer to home.*

We recommend the following four indicators to track our progress toward growing more sustainably in Issaquah:

- **Density:** Density, current and planned by land use (residential, commercial and mixed-use).
- **Green Buildings:** Number of LEED and Built Green certified buildings as a percentage of Issaquah's overall building stock.
- **Population Density:** Population growth in areas of density greater than 12 people per acre, areas over 40 people per acre, and areas less than 12 people per acre.
- **Walkability:** Percent of residents who live within walkability zones, or within walkable distance of essential services such as schools, retail, grocery stores, parks and recreation, and public transportation.



We evaluated five indicators for tracking our smart growth progress and felt that most were needed to monitor our efforts to grow sustainably. Highlights from our discussion include:

- Board members felt the density indicators were easy to understand and good proxies for smart growth.
- Walkability was identified as a good indicator for the category and could be more meaningful than density towards the overall goal. Additional destination types were suggested (employment centers, pharmacies, medical centers).
- Board members discussed the idea of developing an indicator to measure how well Issaquah is prepared to adapt to climate change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indicators for Natural Areas & Open Space

Parks and open space are essential to recreation, improving health, environmental protection, flood protection, a sense of place, and the economic viability of our community.

Our Desired Outcome: *In Issaquah, open spaces will be protected. Our hills will be dominated with conifers as they are today; we will have ample public parks, trails, community gardens, and salmon in our streams. We will have a regional food supply that we can trust and that keeps us healthy.*

We recommend the following four indicators to track our progress to protect vital natural areas and open space in Issaquah:

- **Food Grown Locally:** Acreage of community gardens per capita; Farmer's market revenue by product type.
- **Preserved Natural Open Space:** Percentage of acres city-wide in preserved open space.
- **Stream Health:** Sampling of stream bug species as indicators of stream health.
- **Tree Canopy:** City wide tree canopy coverage and average coverage by neighborhood.



We evaluated four indicators for tracking our success in protecting natural areas and open space in Issaquah and felt that all four were needed. Highlights from our discussion include:

- Board members agreed that Preserved Natural Open Space was the top indicator for this theme. Open space management was believed to be important and a measure of the quality of open space conditions and health should also be included in the future.
- Board members felt that Tree Canopy was an easy way to illustrate and communicate these values to the general public. Analysis should be done to evaluate tree canopy along roads and streams to show where it has the most impact.
- Board members thought Stream Health was a good indicator; it is already being tracked by the City and King County. Additional data points were suggested, such as dissolved oxygen, temperature, and turbidity if possible.
- Board members liked the idea of understanding Issaquah's connection to local food systems by our support for community gardens and farmer's markets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indicators for Transportation

The movement of people, goods, and services is central to Issaquah's success as a city for living, working, and playing. Supporting mobility and alternative transportation contributes to a more sustainable community through a stronger economy, less pollution and waste, and greater connectivity.

Our Desired Outcome: *Issaquah will lead the region by becoming a pedestrian, bike, and transit dominated city. We will have ample public transportation services, bike lanes, and sidewalks to support transportation for all. We will partner with neighboring communities to improve the connectivity of alternative transportation within the region. Our transportation will be carbon-free and use alternative fuels; we will not be reliant on oil or gas.*

We recommend the following three indicators to track our progress in becoming a pedestrian, bike, and transit dominated city:

- **Carbon Footprint:** Carbon emissions produced within the Issaquah community and by sector (transportation, residential, industrial/commercial, waste and other sources).
- **Transportation by Type:** Percent of total travel trips by type of transportation (foot, bicycle, drive alone vehicle, car/vanpool, bus and rail).
- **Walkability:** Percent of residents who live within walkability zones, or within a walkable distance of essential services such as schools, retail, grocery, parks and recreation, and public transportation.



We evaluated six transportation indicators and determined that these three best reflect our goals to promote mobility and alternative transportation. Highlights from our discussion include:

- Transportation by Type was seen as the top choice for the theme. Board members suggested including efficiency and connectedness as part of this indicator. Board members also felt specific goals here would help (e.g. Bellevue's 50% non-motorized mode-split goal).
- Board members recommended a Non-Motorized Intensity of Use indicator (pedestrian and bicycle counts) including measures of attractiveness, quality, safety and comfort. This was identified as a future indicator for development as data becomes available.
- Board members thought that the Carbon Footprint indicator was relevant and cross-cutting, but worried that it could be challenging to communicate to the broader public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indicators for Waste/Resource Use

Waste and resource use is an economic, environmental and social concern. Using fewer resources and managing resource use wisely are cornerstones of efficiency and sustainable action. Choosing less toxic materials and renewable resources promotes a more healthy and sustainable community.

Our Desired Outcome: *In Issaquah, wasting resources will become unthinkable. We will consume less energy and materials and live in such a way that we will not use up our resources. We will replenish what we use.*

We recommend the following four indicators to track our progress in eliminating waste and using resources wisely:

- **Energy Use:** Total energy use per capita and by sector
- **Renewable Energy Use:** Percent of citywide energy use from renewable sources (use as a % of total and by source); Per capita consumption of energy by source of energy (hydro, coal, natural gas, wind etc.).
- **Waste Generation:** Total waste generated, amount landfilled, and amount diverted (i.e. recycled, composted, etc.) by sector.
- **Water Use:** Total water use per capita and by sector; water supplied by source.



We evaluated six waste/resource use indicators and determined that these four best capture our efforts to eliminate waste and use resources wisely. Highlights from our discussion include:

- Board members stressed a focus on waste generation, reuse, and prevention as well as disposal and recycling.
- Board members liked the Energy Use indicator and felt that it would be helpful to track this information by sector.
- The Renewable Energy Use indicator was also liked by most Board members. At least one Member questioned access to renewable sources and the cost-benefit of such activities for families of differing income levels.
- The group discussed the importance of the Issaquah Valley Aquifer as a reliable and inexpensive source of drinking water for the community, and suggested that water supply should be considered as well as water use.

KEYSTONE INDICATORS

Communicating Progress



Sustainability is about the interconnectedness of traditionally separate topics (e.g. health, education, economic vitality, transportation). Throughout our indicator evaluation process, we noted that a number of indicators transcended two or more sustainability themes. For example, Walkability is recommended as a good measure for both the Green, Compact & Mixed-Use Development and Transportation themes. One could also see how Walkability might impact public health with its connection to obesity (Basic Needs) or the success of local business districts through improved pedestrian access and amenities (Business Climate).

To recognize the interconnectedness of the sustainability and to overcome the challenge of reporting 25 indicators to the general public, we identified a subset of 13 keystone indicators from the 25 recommended indicators. Keystone indicators are those that:

- Rise to the surface in terms of importance,
- Best reflect the essence of our priorities in Issaquah, and
- Are cross-cutting in nature by connecting or reflecting change across multiple themes.

While the 25 recommended indicators will be used to more closely monitor the Issaquah community, this smaller set of keystone measures may be used to share progress without overwhelming citizens and policymakers with too much data. The 13 keystone indicators, along with some of the rationale for their selection, are presented below.

KEYSTONE INDICATORS

Communicating Progress (Continued)



1. Carbon Footprint. Reducing carbon emissions has implications for all aspects of sustainability. The City of Issaquah is currently estimating its carbon footprint. There is strong public awareness of our carbon impacts and our State is aggressively leading carbon reporting efforts for the region.



2. Community Health. Access to health care is seen as a public health, economic, and equity concern. This issue is at the forefront of people's minds and even more so now with rising health care costs and unemployment.



3. Diversity of Business. The number, type and longevity of businesses in Issaquah is a critical measure of the health of the local economy, which is connected to jobs, a sense of community, and overall vitality of the city.



4. Education. Strong and successful academic and community education is fundamental to the success of Issaquah future generations and sustainability vision (specific indicator to be developed).



5. Food Bank Use. The use of food banks by Issaquah families is an important proxy for how well the City is serving the economic and social needs of its citizens.

KEYSTONE INDICATORS

Communicating Progress (Continued)



6. Participation in the Arts. Arts and culture is seen as an asset to local economic development. Many businesses and residents look to these amenities when making location decisions. An active arts scene is also an important indicator of a strong community.



7. Population Density. This measure is key to understanding how well the City of Issaquah is managing growth. Smart growth is connected to the use of resources, transportation, the local economy, and other sustainability issues.



8. Preserved Natural and Open Space. As Issaquah grows and changes, it is critical that we protect its beauty and natural areas. These assets can provide habitat, recreation, and essential ecological functions.



9. Revenue Base Diversity. The change in revenue base over time was seen as a core measure of the durability and breadth of the local economy and a good indicator of Issaquah's ability meet citizen needs and provide local opportunity.

“Economic vitality is key for providing resources that give community leaders and our volunteer’s ability to improve and expand on efforts to offer social programs to aid those who need assistance. And economic vitality means local jobs, shopping and health care which benefit the environment. “

Kelly Richardson
Rowley Properties

KEYSTONE INDICATORS

Communicating Progress (Continued)



10. Transportation by Type. Availability and use of alternative or non-motorized transportation in Issaquah by all ages was seen as a priority issue for Issaquah and the region. The movement of people, goods and services is central to Issaquah's success as a city for living, working, and playing.



11. Walkability. This crosscutting indicator influences a range of issues such as public health, thriving local business districts, alternative transportation, and smart growth. Most of the Board members saw this indicator as critical to Issaquah's future.



12. Waste Generation. Waste generation is seen as a core measure of resource use. Waste and recycling are easy to communicate, as they are well understood by the general public, and often cited as a top environmental priorities.



13. Volunteerism. The contribution of volunteer time of community members to improve the quality of life in Issaquah was seen as a good measure of stewardship, which is fundamental to building a more sustainable community.

Again, it is important to stress that the 13 keystone indicators do not diminish the importance and value of the 25 indicators; they are highlighted to offer a more manageable set of measures that adequately reflect sustainability priorities in Issaquah.

MOVING FORWARD

The Sounding Board recognizes that our work is a starting point to a more ambitious goal of taking Issaquah’s sustainability leadership to a higher level. The intent of this project was to establish a set of measures to track what matters to Issaquah – to measure progress towards a sustainable vision. However, the important next step is to use the tool to communicate and motivate success. Putting our recommendations into action requires additional work with community partners to further refine the indicators and collect data, establish benchmarks and goals, communicate progress, and inspire action across the Issaquah community. Specifically, taking our recommendations forward involves:

Refining some indicators; beginning data collection.

Several of the recommended indicators will need further refinement with the help of community partners to design the most meaningful metrics, as well as to acquire the necessary data. In many cases, data are already available. In others, new work to collect data will be needed in order to effectively track progress.

Reporting and communicating sustainability progress

regularly. Communicating sustainability progress across city departments, with the City Council, and to the broader community on a regular basis is critical to spreading awareness, creating community collaboration, and driving positive change.

“It was an honor participating and taking part in this community-building effort. The individuals involved in this endeavor represent a sample of residents who rolled up their sleeves to contribute to a document our whole community can embrace.”

Renee Zimmerman
Issaquah Highlands Council



MOVING FORWARD



Establishing benchmarks and targets for each of the recommended indicators. Throughout the process, many Board members felt it was critical to not only track change over time but to have an explicit goal to drive sustainability agendas and action. Again, involving key partners with expertise and experience in one or more of the sustainability themes will be critical to setting sights on the right target.



Educating and engaging the broader Issaquah community. The City of Issaquah is spearheading a parallel process to reach out through community networks and communicate how and why individuals, organizations, businesses and institutions can and should contribute to sustainability goals. This is a critical first step to fostering dialogue and spurring communitywide action. Planned ideas for offering workshops, presentations and web-based information on sustainability actions, indicators, and progress will promote transparency and build momentum. Other organizations such as Sustainable Issaquah are forming and several local businesses are leaders in sustainability efforts. The indicators offer a great opportunity to highlight the important work of partnering organizations.



Integrating the sustainability framework and indicators into planning and policy conversations. It is our hope that this work will help lay important groundwork in planning and policy discussions for connecting investments and actions to community priorities. Ideally, these recommendations will support and inform long-range planning and decision-making as we set our future course.

Appendix 1

Summary of Recommended Indicators

Appendix 1.

Summary of Recommended Indicators

SUSTAINABILITY AREA		INDICATOR	INDICATOR DESCRIPTION	DATA FEASIBILITY
BN1	Basic Needs	Community Health	Percent of residents with health insurance.	Development required
BN2	Basic Needs	Community Safety	Reported property crime rate.	Currently available
BN3	Basic Needs	Food Bank Use	Number of unique families served per year.	Currently available
BN4	Basic Needs	Housing Affordability Gap	Difference between median income level and median sales price of homes. Affordable units as a percentage of total housing stock.	Development required
BC1	Business Climate	Business Diversity	Number of businesses in the City by size, ownership location, employment, longevity and type.	In development.
BC2	Business Climate	Job-Housing Balance	Ratio of total housing units to jobs in Issaquah.	Currently available
BC3	Business Climate	Participation in the Arts	Attendance at entertainment, cultural and art events.	Some data currently available. Some development required
BC4	Business Climate	Revenue Base Diversity	Total city revenue base by source (local taxes, sales tax, utilities, business license fees, etc).	Currently available
CAS1	Community Awareness & Stewardship	Quality of Life	Resident perception of quality of life in Issaquah.	Development required

Appendix 1.

Summary of Recommended Indicators (Continued)

SUSTAINABILITY AREA		INDICATOR	INDICATOR DESCRIPTION	DATA FEASIBILITY
CAS2	Community Awareness & Stewardship	Volunteerism	Percent of residents volunteering and total hours volunteered in City of community programs.	City program data currently available. Community-wide requires development.
CAS3	Community Awareness & Stewardship	Voter Turnout	Percentage of registered voters who vote in general and local elections. Percentage of eligible voters registered.	Currently available
E	Education	TBD	TBD	TBD
GCM1	Green, Compact & Mixed-Use Development	Current and Planned Density	Density, current and planned by land use (residential, commercial and mixed-use).	Development required
GCM2	Green, Compact & Mixed-Use Development	Green Buildings	Number of LEED/Build Green certified buildings in Issaquah as a percentage of overall building stock.	Currently available
GCM3	Green, Compact & Mixed-Use Development	Population Density	Population growth in areas of density greater than 12 people per acre, areas over 40 people per acre, and areas less than 12 people per acre.	Development required
GCM4	Green, Compact & Mixed-Use Development	Walkability	Percent of residents who live within a walkable distance of essential services (schools, retail, grocery, parks and recreation, and public transportation).	Development required

Appendix 1.

Summary of Recommended Indicators (Continued)

SUSTAINABILITY AREA		INDICATOR	INDICATOR DESCRIPTION	DATA FEASIBILITY
NAO1	Natural Areas & Open Space	Food Grown Locally	Acres of community gardens per capita. Farmer's market revenue by product type.	Farmer's market data currently available
NAO2	Natural Areas & Open Space	Preserved Natural Open Space	Percentage of acres city-wide in preserved open space. Qualitative measure of open space value.	Currently available, qualitative data requires development.
NAO3	Natural Areas & Open Space	Stream Health	Sampling of stream invertebrate species as indicators of stream health.	Currently available
NAO4	Natural Areas & Open Space	Tree Canopy	City wide tree canopy coverage and average coverage by neighborhood.	Currently available
T1	Transportation	Carbon Footprint	Carbon emissions produced within the Issaquah community by sector.	In development
T2	Transportation	Transportation by Type	Percent of total travel trips by type of transportation (foot, bicycle, drive alone vehicle, can/vanpool, bus and rail).	Major employer data currently available, additional development required for city-wide.
T3	Transportation	Walkability	Percent of residents who live within a walkable distance of essential services (schools, retail, grocery, parks and recreation, and public transportation).	Development required

Appendix 1.

Summary of Recommended Indicators (Continued)

SUSTAINABILITY AREA		INDICATOR	INDICATOR DESCRIPTION	DATA FEASIBILITY
WR1	Waste/Resource Use	Energy Use	Total energy use per capita and by sector.	Currently available
WR2	Waste/Resource Use	Renewable Energy Use	Percent of citywide energy use from renewable sources and per capita consumption of energy by source.	Development required
WR3	Waste/Resource Use	Waste Generation	Total waste generated – amount landfilled and amount diverted by sector.	Currently available
WR4	Waste/Resource Use	Water Use	Total water use per capita and by sector. Water supplied by source (groundwater, regional supplies).	Currently available