



Sustainability Action Subcommittee: Overview

The Sustainability Action Subcommittee (SAS) is a group of appointed volunteer community members who care about the greater Spokane community and want to see it thrive. City Council created the SAS in early 2019 in order to focus on issues surrounding climate change and its effects on Spokane and the region. SAS is tasked to research solutions the City and its residents can take to both mitigate our contribution to climate change and help make our community more resilient in the face of these changes. We are fortunate to call the Inland Northwest our home, which is why we are working to prepare Spokane for the challenges and opportunities of the future.



The City of Choice



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Background & Overview

Authorized by and date

On December 17th, 2018, the Spokane City Council passed [Resolution 2018-0110](#) forming the Sustainability Action Subcommittee (SAS) of the City Council's Public Infrastructure, Environment, and Sustainability (PIES) Committee.

Purposes outlined in the resolution

1. Investigate and make periodic reports to the City Council on the progress of the City's efforts toward meeting the City's 2030 goals of 100% renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals starting January 2020 and continuing through goal achievement
2. To make a comprehensive report to the City Council including suggested methods to reach the City's 100% renewable energy and greenhouse gas emissions reductions goals no later than January 1, 2022
3. To recommend any necessary changes to the City's Sustainability Action Plan and necessary policy actions to advance the City's Sustainability Action and Climate Action Plans
4. To recommend issue-specific work plans, such as sustainable transportation and sustainability in the built environment, created with a workgroup consisting of Sustainability Action Subcommittee members and non-subcommittee members experts in each issue area
5. Other specific tasks assigned to the subcommittee by City Council resolution

Membership

As of February 12th, 2020 the SAS has a total of 44 members: 38 Active members and 6 Advisory members.

Membership Definitions

Acting members

- Are voting members
- Required to attend 75% SAS general meetings and 75% of their workgroup meetings
- Cannot miss more than 2 consecutive general or workgroup meetings

Advisory Members

- Must be an expert in a particular field (i.e. health care, renewable energy) and assigned to a particular workgroup
- Non-voting member without attendance requirements
- Able to provide feedback on recommendations without voting

Overview of Membership Process

For the first year of the subcommittee's existence, membership was awarded to any member of the Spokane community with an interest in participating. The only requirement for membership was to complete the SAS

application. In February of the second year (2020), Council stopped accepting membership applications in order to maintain a manageable team of volunteers.

Anyone interested in participating in the SAS process after February 2020 is given the option to be on a wait list for membership vacancy in the future. Additionally, all interested persons will be put on the SAS communication distribution and receive a copy of any communication sent to the public, and will be offered opportunities for future stakeholder engagement.

2019 – The First Year

During the first quarter of 2019, Council began accepting applications for the Sustainability Action Subcommittee. As chair of the PIES committee, then Council Member Breean Beggs envisioned this group as “the brainchild of Spokane’s very own [Project Drawdown](#)”. According to CM Beggs, “this means identifying the areas of city and community operations that have the highest potential to experience increased sustainability over the next five years and the action steps it would take to achieve those improvements. Areas that are at the top of my mind based on my current understanding are: water conservation (well under way), increased renewable energy generation in and around the city, energy conservation in the built environment, reduction of waste stream (including, reduction of packaging, recycling, composting and reuse), transportation transformation to electrical vehicles and mode shift to transit, cycling and walking.”

As the team began to take shape, CM Beggs purposely left the directive on *how* we achieve the above stated goals up to the volunteer citizens that make up the SAS. He wanted the subcommittee to pursue ideas that members felt passionate about. His vision is what we refer to as the *democratization of policy making*, where policy ideas are vetted by a broad range of local stakeholders and bubble up into practice rather than being mandated from a single elected official or governing body. “By the end of the year I would like to see at least five concrete recommendations (changes in city operations or changes in city ordinances) and at least three recommendations for further study by the City”, CM Beggs told the subcommittee during the first meeting.

Deliverables & Directives for 2019

By July of 2019, the following agreements & processes were developed:

Rules Of Engagement

- Everyone participates and gives time for others to speak
- Debate ideas, not people
- Be willing to change your mind
- Be open to new approaches & ideas
- Look for overlapping ideas

Workgroups

SAS decided to form 8 initial workgroups in order to break the work into more manageable pieces:

1. Built Environment
2. Energy
3. Health Equity
4. Natural Resources

5. Planning & Land Use
6. Sustainability Action Planning/Climate Action Planning (SAP/CAP)
7. Transportation
8. Waste/Recycling

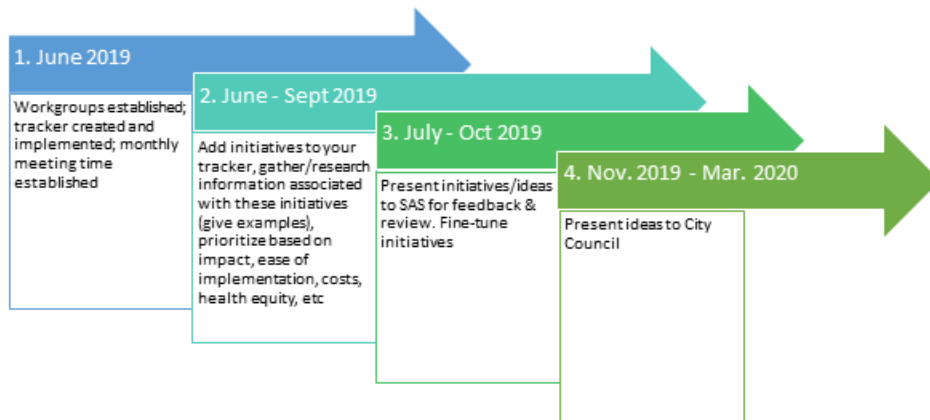
Deliverables

The high level goal of the Sustainability Action Subcommittee is to research and recommend actions that can be taken by the City Council to address issues surrounding Climate Change & Environmental Sustainability. Specifically, each workgroup was asked to identify the following:

1. Maintain a tracker – keep a running list of ideas, large or small and even if there is not agreement or consensus. The idea here is that we capture your group’s brainstorming sessions to track all ideas to determine if the City can adopt or implement the idea, work with other stakeholders to implement it, or build on the idea with current City operations or programs.
2. Identify three changes in policy or city operations to address Climate Mitigation, Climate Adaptation, or Environmental Sustainability that can be taken in 2019. Rank those three suggestions in order of preferred action. Ranking should consider ease of implementation, size of the impact, and potential cost implications.
3. Identify three additional actions for further research in 2020.

PROCESSES

Process & timeline for moving workgroup recommendations up to Council



Vetting Process

Before ideas are presented to Council, the following process takes place:

1. The sponsoring workgroup submits the idea, along with any supporting documentation, to SAS Coordinator in advance of the next SAS meeting. The more time the workgroup gives prior to the meeting, the longer SAS members will have to review the material
2. Workgroup will present idea to larger SAS during monthly meeting
3. Q&A will follow as time allows. Depending on the discussion, the initiative will either be brought to a vote to move forward, or sent back to the workgroup for more information.
4. Workgroups are to connect with the City staff to get input on the recommendation if the administration is interested in participating with the proposed practice or policy.

Health Equity Review

Social inequities across our community play a significant role in the health outcomes of our citizens. Because of this, the effects of climate change are expected to more significantly impact our most vulnerable residents. Also referred to as social determinants of health, these disparities are influenced by education, income, race, access to healthcare, and even by the neighborhoods in which we live. For more information on health equity and climate change, visit [the World Health Organization's](#) website or the [Washington State Department of Health's](#) website.

Each policy recommendation is to follow this review process prior to being implemented by Council:

1. Submit the recommendation to the Health Equity team for review a minimum of one week prior to presentation at the monthly SAS meeting
2. Health Equity team will meet and review the recommendation prior to the SAS meeting
3. At the SAS meeting Health Equity team provides brief oral feedback; alternatively written feedback is provided directly to the workgroup sponsoring the initiative
4. Written feedback will be saved to the workgroup's shared drive for reference

Notes on Health Equity process:

- This process allows for recommendations to be vetted through a health equity lens before they go before the entire SAS – this will more carefully vet and improve ideas by identifying unintended health consequences before the entire committee weighs in.
- Refer to the May 2019 [Public Health Presentation](#) for a review on health equity
- The concept can be difficult to grasp due to the high number of various environmental factors that can impact public health and equity

Voting

After a workgroup has presented an initiative or proposal to advance to Council, each member of SAS is asked (via email) to vote on the recommendation by selecting one of the following responses:

1. I can say an unqualified “yes” to the decision.
2. I find the decision acceptable.
3. I can live with the decision, but I’m not especially enthusiastic about it.
4. I do not fully agree with the decision, but I do not choose to block it.
5. I do not agree with the decision, and I feel we should explore other options.

If all the responses from the group members are 1, 2, 3, or 4, you have a consensus and are ready to move on. If the majority of the group answers 1-4, and one or more member answers 5, then the initiative will move forward with a minority report written by those members who voted 5. If less than 60% of the SAS votes 1-4, the initiative will go back to the workgroup for further consideration.

In short, when creating recommendations, we ask the workgroup to keep in mind that they need to convince the full SAS group, then PIES, *then* City Council. We recommend that the workgroup prepares sufficient evidence and support when presenting their recommendation, not just the recommendation itself (don't assume “preaching to the choir” situation). This is not a situation where recommendations either get

accepted or ditched; it might take a few meetings to receive feedback and evolve the proposal before it's accepted.

Note: If possible, workgroups should align their initiatives with the city's [Comprehensive Plan](#) and/or existing policy.

Partnerships with City Staff

The SAS prioritizes working with City staff during all stages of this process, from idea generation to implementation of new proposals. This means that whenever a recommendation has the potential to impact City operations, workgroups will consult with the City department(s) impacted. We recognize that we experience greater success as a community when the subcommittee is able to work side-by-side with the administration in order to fine-tune our recommendations to be most efficient and in alignment with City objectives.

Deliverables & Directives for 2020

The SAS will continue to follow the above processes for moving ideas forward. Additionally, the following specific goals and objectives have been identified for 2020:

Workgroup Deliverables

	Deliverable	Due Date
1.	Continue to maintain idea tracker and indicate initiatives being prioritized by the workgroup	Ongoing
2.	Identify GHG Reduction targets for their relevant sectors	March 16
3.	Identify 3-5 Big Actions the community should take to accomplish sector specific targets by 2030	March 16
4.	Identify incremental steps or "key actions" needed to accomplish those Big Actions in the next 10 years	June 30
5.	Recommend updates to Comprehensive Plan ¹	TBD

Specific Subcommittee Deliverables

	Deliverable	Workgroup	Due Date
1.	Complete high-level Climate Action Plan	SAP/CAP	April 15
2.	Launch SAS website: Phase 1	Communications	March 27
3.	Launch SAS website: Phase 2	Communications	May 29
4.	Complete broad community engagement plan	Communications	April 15
5.	Conduct existing climate policy audit	SAP/CAP	March 27

2020 Workgroups

1. Built Environment
2. Communication

¹ Each workgroup is asked to consider their relevant chapters of the comprehensive plan. Should changes be made to the Comp Plan to reflect the City's goals toward Climate Mitigation, Climate Adaptation, or Environmental Sustainability

3. Energy
4. Health Equity
5. Natural Resources
6. Planning & Land Use
7. Sustainability Action Planning/Climate Action Planning (SAP/CAP)
8. Transportation (Active)
9. Transportation (Vehicle)
10. Waste/Recycling

Resources & Documents

The following are some of the resources are guiding the SAS work

- [Guiding Principles for City Climate Action Planning](#)
- [Climate Action Planning](#): A guide to creating low-carbon, resilient communities by Michael R. Boswell, Adrienne I. Greve, Tammy L. Seale
- Ordinance C35668 – 2018 Sustainability Action Commission Ordinance [SMC 04.36](#)
- Ordinance C35519 – 2017 Climate Change, Global Warming, & Sustainability Action Plan [SMC 15.05](#)
- 2009 City of Spokane [Sustainability Action Plan](#)
- [National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences](#)
- Washington State Department of Health – [Washington Tracking Network](#), a source for public health data

Acknowledgements

In addition to the work currently underway by local environmental nonprofit organizations, the following people have made valuable contributions to paving the way towards climate action and sustainability in Spokane. We would like to recognize their efforts and thank them for making the health and wellbeing of our residents a priority.

Mayor Mary Verner (2007-2011)

Mayor's Task Force on Sustainability (2008-2009)

Council President Ben Stuckart (2011-2019)

Senior Executive Assistant to the Council President Adam McDaniel (2013-2019)