

# **NATURAL RESOURCES**

## **Energy**

**Adopted: 1976, Revised 2010**

The well being, and perhaps the very existence, of the peoples of the world and of life generally on our planet, lie under grave threat from climate change which stems from the proliferation of greenhouse gases produced primarily by the activities of human kind.

This worldwide problem is of concern to the League at the national, state, and regional level. At the local level, we must reduce our carbon footprint, acting as individuals and through voluntary organizations, and through public private entities.

Our efforts should encompass four goals:

1. Red Reduction in energy consumption and increase in energy efficiency
2. Promotion of energy sources that do not produce greenhouse gases
3. Promotion of sustainability in the use of resources, such as water and materials with an emphasis on use of local resources.
4. Promotion of growth patterns (i.e., Smart Growth) that encourage walking, bicycling, mass transit, and carpooling in order to lessen greenhouse emissions.

Our targets include buildings and activities of:

1. Public entities such as cities, schools, and special districts;
2. Commercial and industrial units and rental housing;
3. Housing of private individuals;
4. Transportation systems.

Our actions include support of the following:

1. Development and utilization of measures to monitor progress; including establishing and tracking an inventory of local greenhouse gas emissions.
2. Education of the public, including students, and leaders of private and public entities on the necessity and means of reducing our carbon footprint.
3. Establishment of land use regulation and building codes to achieve a reduction in our carbon footprint.
4. Financial and other incentives for reduction in our carbon footprint.
5. Full life cycle cost accounting including greenhouse gas emissions.

## **Land Use and Planning**

**Adopted: 1965, Updated 1983, 2002**

**LWVSJ/SC supports:**

- The principle that a community should have a master or general plan which is a written policy statement of community goals.
- Cooperation by the County of Santa Clara and the cities within its boundaries in zoning decisions affecting land use adjacent to or within city boundaries. Such decisions should be compatible with a city's long range plans for land use in its sphere of influence.

## **LAND USE GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES**

**1. Master Plans:** Support the principle that a community should have a master or general plan which is a written policy statement of community goals. An effective master plan should be general, comprehensive and long range; based on current economic and land use studies; state goals agreed upon by citizens and the legislative body; clear, concise, readily available and meaningful to the ordinary citizen; used as an educational document as well as guide to the city's growth; and periodically reviewed. Citizens with diverse interests and backgrounds should play an active role in developing the plan. The general plan must be the adopted policy statement of the elected legislators. Once adopted, it must have strict adherence.

**2. The Planning Director:** Should be a professional planner, qualified by a degree in planning and experienced in this field. Particularly important are abilities as an administrator and in public relations.

**3. The Planning Commission:** Should be composed of qualified persons of diverse occupations and interests who represent a cross-section of the community. As an advisory group to the legislative body, the commission has responsibility for both the mechanics of zoning and public education, with emphasis on working with citizens' groups and public education.

**4. The Planning Department:** Should have more power in zoning matters, with final appeal of decisions with the legislative body. An architect and/or landscape architect should be on the department staff.

**5. Citizen Advisory Committees:** Should be appointed by the Planning Commission, broadly based, and established on an ad hoc basis for a specific planning issue. Citizen Advisory Committees are desirable to inform the commissioners of diverse citizen views and to involve more citizens in the planning process and should reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the community.

**6. County-Wide Planning:** Is essential to be done by an effective governmental planning agency. Such a county-wide agency should be set up, preferably by county ordinance, but if voluntary cooperation fails to be effective, the State of California should create the agency. San Mateo County's Regional Planning Committee could serve as a model for this agency. Membership could be a combination of legislators, planning commissioners, planning directors and citizens. Effective use should be made of planning staffs from city and county

planning departments, community experts, and particularly the wealth of academic persons in the county.

**7. Architectural Control:** Is strongly favored in some form. A program of architectural control could be implemented in a variety of ways.

**8. General Plan:** Support an Urban Service Area Boundary as a mechanism to phase growth and outline the urban container.

- a. Support Level of Service policies which require accurate records of service delivery and service potential as determined by scheduled improvement. Support the adoption of a Level of Service Standard for city service delivery. Service levels cannot be allowed to fall below the minimum standard adopted. New development which would cause the delivery of city services to fall below the minimum standard should be strictly curtailed in the affected areas until services can be provided at the proper levels.
- b. Exceptions to General Plan policies which are made for reasons on "overriding considerations" must be based on supportable fact and be able to stand up to judicial review.
- c. A specific EIR must be prepared for major expansions of the Urban Service Area Boundary or for significant exceptions to adopted General Plan policies.
- d. Urban development should not be permitted on hillsides above the 15% slope line because of safety considerations, service delivery difficulty and expense, and the value of hillsides as scenic and environmental resources.
- e. Sewage treatment capacity should be a major factor in determining land use in the General Plan. Responsible planned growth includes responsible planning for sewage capacity.

### **SUPPLEMENT TO LAND USE POSITION**

**Adopted: 1973**

1. Support cooperation by the County of Santa Clara and the cities within its boundaries in zoning decisions affecting land use adjacent to or within city boundaries. Such decisions should be compatible with a city's long range plans for land use in its sphere of influence.
2. Support land use policies that control, direct, and limit growth.
3. Support the need for a strong diversified economy, providing employment, services, and tax base for the cities and the county. In order to attain and maintain a sound economic base, support city and county commercial and industrial development policies that will promote local employment

opportunities and protect environmental quality. Such policies should:

- a. Encourage the location here of firms that employ local residents primarily.
  - b. Encourage the location here of firms that use non- polluting processes.
  - c. Require industries to meet official local and other jurisdictional environmental quality standards.
  - d. Provide aid in job placement, job training and job retraining as a proper function of government.
  - e. Insure that plans for industrial and commercial zones are compatible with adjoining community land use, transportation facilities and public services.
4. Discourage the location here of firms that do not employ local residents primarily, whose processes do not meet environmental quality standards and/or that are in other ways detrimental to the policies of promoting a quality environment and controlling growth.  
Support resolution of conflicts between economic, social and environmental goals through public, objective evaluation of complete information of the proposal's impact on the community or communities involved.

## **ZONING**

### **Adopted 1965**

Support the principle of zoning as a means of implementing the policies stated in the general plan. The zoning ordinance should be periodically reviewed and revised, with a major revision at least every five years; include a section on sign and billboard control; allow Planned Unit Development for residential, commercial and industrial uses (a mixture of these uses and/or density increase could be allowed if desired); require utilities to be underground when replaced. Citizens must be notified of rezoning hearings, preferably by letter, but also by newspaper publication. Grouping hearings by planning area and holding a meeting every two or three months would facilitate citizen participation and notification of hearings would also enable the county to work more effectively with different citizens and areas within cities. A county-wide zoning language is desirable.

Zoning is necessary in our society to protect individual rights as well as to promote the common good. The zoning ordinances should implement the policies stated in the general plan, but the ordinance itself should not be incorporated into the general plan.

Citizens should be notified of hearings on zoning not only by posting but also by publication in local newspapers and by mail to immediate area residents. Zoning hearings should be grouped according to area to facilitate citizen awareness and participation in the planning process.

Periodic review and revision of the zoning ordinance is necessary, no less than every five years. Zoning ordinances should reflect actual zoning practices and

incorporate new ideas in planning. Maps and texts should be readily available in City Hall.

Support a county-wide zoning language based on the Santa Clara County Planning Department proposal but with each city using only those symbols that are relevant to it.

Support a sign and billboard control ordinance.

Support Planned Unit Development for residential, commercial and industrial uses. Such PUD's could have mixed uses and increased densities as long as controls were strictly applied and densities were related to the servicing facilities such as roads, schools, and sewers.

Support undergrounding of utilities in new construction areas, particularly in subdivisions. Worn out utilities in all types of developments should be replaced by underground utilities when feasible.

## **Development of Coyote Valley**

**Adopted 2004, Updated 2010**

The League of Women Voters, at all levels of organization, supports planning for growth management through the General Plan process. The LWV San Jose/Santa Clara recognizes that the Coyote Valley is an integral part of San Jose economically, geographically and as a user of city services. The Valley also has regional importance, particularly in terms of its open space and watershed functions and the impact of its development on neighboring jurisdictions.

1. The League does not advocate development of Coyote Valley, but recognizes that the General Plan does provide for development of the northern portion of the valley.
2. The General Plan establishes conditions, known as triggers, which must be met and in place before development can occur. The League considers these triggers to be relevant and critical and they should not be weakened or abandoned. These triggers are:
  - a. Building permits are issued for 5,000 new jobs before housing is built. League supports phasing in housing and jobs to maintain the critical jobs-housing balance. Furthermore, these jobs must be new and not displace jobs from other parts of the city.
  - b. The City's fiscal position is stable, predictable and adequate for the long-term. The League is concerned that Coyote Valley development does not have a negative impact on the City's fiscal stability and commitments to other parts of the city and to other major projects.
  - c. City services are maintained at the same level as in 1993. The League believes that services for residents of Coyote Valley must not come at the cost of reduced services for residents in any other part of San Jose.
  - d. There is reasonable certainty that the City's fiscal relationship with the State and other levels of government will not be significantly altered

for a five-year forecast. The League is aware of the results on the City of such acts as expropriation of local funds by the State to help balance the State's fiscal shortfalls.

3. Any future Coyote Valley Specific Plan should include the Greenbelt. Accessible open space is an invaluable part of Coyote Valley and San Jose. It should be preserved through:
  - a. Mechanisms that ensure, create and protect open space.
  - b. Offering incentives for the protection of habitat and recreational and agricultural uses.

The League concludes that Coyote Valley development should be based on a comprehensive plan that promotes environmental and economic sustainability, especially in regard to open space, public services, water and hydrology elements, habitat conservation and public transit systems. The plan should incorporate zoning and design controls to develop a livable and aesthetically attractive community. The community should be of environmental and economic benefit to the City and a good neighbor to adjoining jurisdictions.

4. Any future Coyote Valley Specific Plan should emphasize the need for careful planning that promotes environmental and economic stability and incorporates zoning and design controls to develop a livable and aesthetically pleasing outcome.
  - a. If such planning occurs, the League supports the merger of the northern area originally considered for industrial use with the central area considered for residential use into one mixed use area with the understanding that:
    - 1) Residential areas should be buffered from disruptive manufacturing activities or heavy industry.
    - 2) Growth should be compact, oriented to transit, with integration of jobs and housing.
  - b. The League supports broad environmental traffic and economic analyses that will provide the information necessary to make long-term decisions, keeping in mind:
    - 1) The uniqueness and large scale of Coyote Valley.
    - 2) The effect of development on all of San Jose and the surrounding region.
    - 3) Coyote Valley's natural function is as a watershed/ drainage area. Planning must incorporate the factors of runoff and flooding, the high water table, the flow of water all the way to the Bay, and protection of the underground aquifer and water supply.

## **Transportation**

**Adopted 1972, Updated 2001**

LWVSJ/SC supports:

The need for transportation planning as an integral part of the overall plan for the area. Broad citizen participation should be encouraged to aid in the formulation of goals and plans to meet this objective.

1. Transportation must consider the needs of all people to:
  - a. Enable the low income and unemployed to get to the industrial complexes and to other sources of employment and services.
  - b. Provide bike routes and paths which would serve a wide variety of public needs, including, but not limited to, bicycle transportation as an alternative to the automobile as well as for recreational purposes.
2. Some form of mass transit is needed to augment the present system of freeways and expressways.
  - a. Buses must have convenient routes and schedules, plus a promotional campaign to get public support.
  - b. A Bay Area wide mass transit system should include Santa Clara County.
3. County wide coordination is absolutely necessary in solving transportation problems.
  - a. Support the use of feeder lines and the coordination of systems between cities.
  - b. Support public ownership and operation of transportation facilities under a County Transportation Authority.
4. A combination of methods should be used to finance mass transit in Santa Clara County.
  - a. Federal funds should be used when available.
  - b. Gas tax money should be made available to build a mass transit system (constitutional amendment).
5. The following criteria should be used in evaluating any proposal for airport expansion or relocation:
  - a. Air quality, as determined by the California and federal standards.
  - b. Regulation of noise levels as established by the state and federal standards.
  - c. Compatible land use in surrounding areas.
  - d. Realistic estimates of population and cargo needs.
  - e. Independent professional study evaluating social and economic costs in relation to benefits.

## **Urban Renewal/Redevelopment**

**Adopted 1964, Updated 1990**

LWVSJ/SC supports:

Urban renewal/redevelopment programs utilizing conservation, rehabilitation and redevelopment --- which should include: conformity to an adopted general plan for the city or the appropriate political jurisdiction, adherence to effective and current codes and ordinances, adequate financing, local government responsibility for relocation, broad citizen participation and efficient and economic administration by qualified personnel.

1. Support an Urban Renewal/Redevelopment program for the following reasons:
  - a. Eliminating and preventing blight.
  - b. Consolidating parcels of land into the large parcels needed for proper redevelopment of the central area, using the right of eminent domain.
  - c. Increasing tax revenue from an area through the erection of new buildings having a higher assessed value than the old ones.
  - d. Obtaining a better image of the city.
2. Support the use of conservation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment together in an integrated program based on the condition of individual areas involved.
3. Support a general plan including neighborhood analysis as a prerequisite to urban renewal.
4. Support codes and ordinances as a basis for the implementation of the rehabilitation and conservation programs. Support active enforcement of those codes and ordinances.
5. Support an Urban Renewal/Redevelopment program which is administered efficiently and economically by an adequate staff of qualified people. Realistic time limits, as well as fiscal limits, should be set for redevelopment projects. To extend limits, redevelopment agency should be required to follow same procedure when setting up redevelopment project area (especially in the area of citizen participation and fiscal review). Encourage a well managed phase out plan and curtailing of an existing redevelopment agency when appropriate. Proper communication and cooperation with city government is essential.
6. Support adequate financing from a variety of sources, including, but not limited to, tax increment financing. Support revenue sharing that is fair and is subject to periodic renegotiation.
7. Support a responsible relocation program which includes provision for safe, decent, and sanitary housing within the means of relocatees which is also accessible to transportation, jobs, schools, and other public facilities.
  - a. Policies should reflect the desirability of maintaining the integrity of a community or neighborhood whenever possible, particularly when affected citizens have expressed objections to relocation out of that particular neighborhood.
  - b. Where permanent relocation of residents is required, emphasis should be placed on equal dispersal of low income housing throughout the community.
  - c. Support use of minimum 20% of redevelopment revenue for purpose of providing or assisting in provision of low to moderate income housing. Consideration should be given to aesthetics of construction and programs to meet the social and educational needs of the occupants. Any development should provide for an adequate ratio between density and open space.
8. Support citizen participation, including direct participation of affected persons, in goal formation and other policies of direct relevance to potential redevelopment areas. A majority of any formal citizen participation group should

consist of project area residents, homeowners, and groups affected by the project including, but not limited to, business, civic organizations, residents, neighborhood organizations and homeowners groups. There should be opportunities for widespread public participation. The number of people serving on the formal project area committee should be limited to a workable size. The project committee must have some measurable authority in approving project plans.

9. Support well designed responsible programs with a minimum of individual hardships and community disruption and a maximum of coordination with affected citizens to be relocated.

10. Support Urban Renewal/Redevelopment programs that provide:

- a. Increased tax base.
- b. Encouragement of private and public investment.
- c. Social and aesthetic benefits.
- d. Community identity and civic pride.
- e. Such programs should justify the economic costs incurred and the social costs, including displacement of people.