

Request for Consideration – EPSAC Role in Reviewing Development Projects for Alignment to Environmental Action Plan

Background

The Environmental Performance Standards Advisory Committee (EPSAC) serves as an advisory body to City Council and staff on matters related to municipal environmental performance, sustainability, and stewardship of resources. The Committee's purpose, as outlined in its bylaws, is to "advise City Council and city staff on matters pertaining to the development and implementation of the Environmental Action Plan".

While much of recent EPSAC work has focused on municipal operations, there are several portions of the EAP that draw attention to the City's role in influencing environmental and sustainability behaviors of residents and non-governmental entities (Guiding Goal 1, Focus Area 1: Goal 6, Focus Area 2: Goals 1, 3 and 4, Focus Area 4: Goal 6, Focus Area 6: Goals 2 and 4, and the Community Goals).

At a recent EPSAC meeting, a member of the public expressed interest in having development projects evaluated for their alignment with the City's sustainability goals and Environmental Action Plan. Committee members agreed that there could be value in providing an objective framework for understanding how proposed developments support or detract from the City's adopted environmental goals.

This framework would be presented as a means to promote, encourage, and prioritize climate resiliency, household financial stability, and environmental quality beyond municipal operations as is consistent with the EAP.

Purpose of Request

EPSAC respectfully requests that the City Manager consider authorizing the development of a process that would allow the Committee to provide a useful tool for city staff, Planning Commission, and City Council on the environmental performance of proposed development projects, based on alignment with the City's Environmental Action Plan and other adopted community goals.

The intent is not to create an additional layer in the formal development review process, but rather to:

- Continue to educate developers, property owners, Planning Commission members, etc. about the EAP and its contents.
- Encourage developers to consider sustainability elements early in project design.
- Provide objective, transparent information about how proposed projects align with environmental priorities outlined in the EAP
- Support Planning Commission and City Council decision-making by offering a consistent evaluation framework.

Proposed Framework

If this request is approved, EPSAC would assist in developing an Environmental Performance Scoring Rubric that enables evaluation of proposed developments as against the relevant EAP goals and strategies:

- FA 1 Goal 6: Encourage Efforts to Improve Energy Efficiency and Increase Renewable Energy and Sustainable Energy Sources
- FA 2 Goal 1: Modernize and Establish Enduring Land Use and Development Patterns
- FA 2 Goal 3: Maintain and Increase a Healthy Tree Canopy
- FA 3 Goal 4: Evaluate Opportunities for Underutilized Public and Private Lands and Consider Opportunities to Rehabilitate and Create New Natural Habitats
- FA 4 Goal 6: Continue to Coordinate Land Use Planning and Regulations with Transportation Planning
- FA 6 Goal 2: Implement the Water Use and Water Loss Management Plans
- FA 6 Goal 4: Protect and Enhance Water Quality of Surface Water and Stormwater Runoff

Proposed developments would be scored according to these goals, producing an overall “EAP Alignment Rating.”

Two Options for Implementation

Option 1 – Standard Review:

EPSAC would meet monthly (or as needed) to review staff-prepared environmental performance scores prepared by the Sustainability and Environmental Manager for all proposed developments scheduled for Planning Commission review. The Committee would have the opportunity to confirm or adjust the score before it is included in the Planning Commission and City Council packets. This option ensures consistency across

development proposals and visibility of sustainability practices for every development project.

Option 2 – Review Upon Request:

EPSAC would provide environmental performance scoring only when specifically requested by the Planning Commission or City Council for a particular project. This option provides flexibility and limits workload for both EPSAC and City staff, while still making the resource available for priority or high-impact projects.

Next Steps

If this proposal is acceptable in concept, EPSAC requests direction from the City Manager on:

1. Whether the Committee should proceed with developing the scoring rubric framework in coordination with staff.
2. Which review option, if any, would best align with the City's development review process and administrative capacity.

EPSAC is prepared to draft an initial rubric and bring it back for review and input before implementation.

Conclusion

The Committee believes this process could add value by promoting transparency, consistency, and accountability in how development projects advance the City's environmental and sustainability goals—without adding procedural delays or duplicating existing reviews.