

Sustainable Solano

Theory of Change

Approved by the Board on March 10, 2020

I. Need Statement

The world we have built is not ecologically, socially, or economically sustainable. At the root of the problem is our loss of connections to Earth, each other and something larger than ourselves. A successful transition to a sustainable and just future requires alignment of our values for the good of the whole, change in the way we interact with the natural environment, and applying a sustainability framework to the way we create our built environment. There is an urgent need to shift the paradigm from extractive to regenerative systems.

II. Target Population

We foster immediate and personal collaboration of all community members through tangible projects aiming to build the world that works for everyone. Participation of all sectors of our society in this work is crucial to a successful transition to a sustainable and just future. Yet different sectors of the population have different ways of engagement based on the level of their interest, availability and capacity.

Service Population

General Public – The General Public is our service population as our programs are designed to include any and all interested individuals.

Target Populations

Champions - It is a priority to support individuals who take initiative in their communities and demonstrate a passion for this work. Our goal is to support them on their path to action and empower them through providing the tools, education, guidance and resources they need. These champions recognize the urgency and are looking for interpretation, education and a connection to community in which to engage and make a difference.

Youth (age 14-18) – The world that our youth will inherit is what we are striving to improve, so it is imperative that young people are included in the conversation about the future as well as nurtured into the leaders that will be needed to carry this work forward for generations to come. Our priorities are targeted education of authentic change-makers, efforts to foster healthy integration to society, workforce development, cultivation of leadership skills, and the capacity to think, feel and act toward the good of the whole.

Low-income community: Low-income communities often shoulder a disproportionate burden of environmental stressors and have historically been overlooked in sustainability dialogs and efforts. A tailored approach is needed for low-income communities with the highest need, which includes focused education and support for transformative actions, including guidance and funding, and direct assistance with tangible projects by the Youth Workforce Development teams.

Our target population is a **mix** of all of these subgroups **working together** on shared projects. By linking different subsets of the population together, there is an opportunity to support social cohesion and equity – bringing people together.

III. Core Services & Programs

Services aim to advance our goal to shift toward more inclusive social norms, values and behaviors. Every program has a service element, while programs focus on more immediate action and outcomes that can be achieved by going deeper with participants on key elements of sustainability and resiliency.

Services

1. Conversations (Urgency)

Immediate and long-term impact: fostering connections in community, supporting meaningful conversations aiming to examine and grasp challenges and opportunities of our collective humanity, ability to be present to the differences in opinions and look for shared solutions, healing the divide in our society.

Format: community education events, in forms and places suitable and desirable by various communities (e.g. films, talks, workshops), on the topics of climate change, community resilience, building a world that works for everyone, personal transformation, building community health, wealth and capacity.

Listening Circles program is a form of community conversations, where targeted (vs. self-selected) low-income community groups participate in the guided conversations about the immediate challenges and opportunities in their neighborhoods, and practical shared solutions that engage community members in hands-on experience and/or inspire to build their capacity to participate in the policy/decision making that impact the quality of life in their communities. This program creates a link for our target populations from informed conversations to action by identifying, engaging and preparing neighborhoods for future funding and green infrastructure development through the Resilient Neighborhoods / Leadership and Workforce Development programs.

Service Elements:

- Listening Circles
- Conversations
- Communication
- Public Engagement / Outreach

Programs

1. Leadership and Workforce Development (Urgency & Agency)

The long-term impact: next generation that is aware of the challenges and opportunities of our collective humanity, equipped with knowledge, understanding and practical skills to build a more sustainable world, and a capacity to consider the good of the whole as they move into the "real world". The immediate goal is to guide and inspire students to live happy and healthy lives within the environmental capacity of one planet, to develop an understanding of sustainability principles and equip them with practical skills to make a difference while preparing them for the next green economy.

Education that involves hands, heads and hearts: practical skills training (green infrastructure, sustainable water management, food preparation, solar installations), study of sustainability frameworks (e.g. One Planet Living, UN Sustainability Development goals, etc.) and supported conversations aiming to give student access to their authentic self and eventually to the capacity of considering the good of the whole.

Format: longer, during-school programs incorporated into the curriculum and shorter, intensive "camps" in Solano County.

Program Elements:

- Workforce Development
- Curriculum
- One Planet Camp

2. Resilient Neighborhoods (Agency)

Resilient Neighborhoods have applied place-specific, evidence-based mitigation strategies to improve economic, social and environmental resilience. These solutions are implemented at the neighborhood level in partnerships with local government, business and community members.

The long-term impact: Healthy and Rooted Communities

Healthy Community is a community that is continuously creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources that enable

people to mutually support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing to their maximum potential.

A Rooted Community is one in which the residents are knowledgeable and engaged in the issues and institutions that impact the quality of life in their community and are able to place Authentic Demands on those institutions.

Format: public workshops (food forests, laundry-to-landscape greywater, maintenance and care, irrigation systems). Supported by the Workforce Development program and one Planet Camps.

Resilient Neighborhoods acts as an umbrella program for all Green Infrastructure work.

Program Elements:

- Resilient Neighborhoods (pilot)
- Sustainable Backyard
- Solano Gardens
- Urban Forest

3. Local Food System (Agency)

The long-term impact: Community health and wealth

According to the World Health Organization, health is a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Community wealth strategies are designed to draw more dollars into the community for community-benefiting purposes.

Goal: Create an environmentally sustainable, economically viable, socially just and equitable local food system in Solano County, to diversify, expand and safeguard a local healthy food economy that will preserve farmland, its integrity and biodiversity in Solano County, and ensure food access for local communities.

A local food system is a collaborative network that integrates sustainable food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management in order to enhance the environmental, economic, and social health of a particular area.

Program Elements:

- Public Education
- Farm to Institution / schools
- Agritourism
- Local Food System Alliance

4. Upcoming: Waste Management, Energy – TBD (Agency)

IV. Research, Evidence, Beliefs & Assumptions.

Beliefs and Assumptions

- Today's environmental, economical and social crisis is largely due to our loss of connection with the whole, with life in its totality. When a personal gain of few trumps the collective good of all, we have environmental degradation, climate change, economic instability, income disparity, all forms of life suffering, and social, environmental and economic injustice. Sustainability starts in human hearts.
- Every community needs vision and leadership toward sustainability and community resilience. While the root of sustainability is a heart-based action, the actual framework of sustainability is well-described and includes alternative energy, wise use of and care for water, clean air, sustainable food production, waste management, and transportation. On a social level, sustainability also includes health care, education and arts. On a personal level, consumption and our relationship with accumulation of material wealth is a key factor in sustainable living.
- The human being is at the heart of the work we do. This guides us to put the connections between community, individuals and mother earth at the forefront. Through this framework, we can then build trust, engagement, accountability and ultimately an abundance mindset.
- Each and every human being carries a seed of good and beauty within. The path to this core of our being is different for every person. The access is not guaranteed. However, once a person is in touch with his or her true self, actions toward the good of the whole become possible.
- Education is a key component to building connection. By helping people understand where the problem is and how to address it through their decisions and actions, we grow a community of individuals focused on something bigger than themselves.
- Every life on this planet should be held and honored with the same regard - both human and nonhuman life.
- By providing opportunities to improve our immediate surroundings (agency), we are fostering the connections that are essential to sustainable presence of humans and non-humans on Earth.
- Sustainable Solano's role is to introduce a balanced sense of **urgency** (education & inspiration to take actions for the good of the whole) and **agency** (skills, tools & structures) to our communities.
- We are informed by not only science, but Wisdom (moral values, knowledge of older generations & indigenous people, and community wisdom/feedback)

Research & Evidence

- Sustainability framework is a set of governing principles to promote ecological, social & economic sustainability of a society. The most comprehensive global sustainability framework was developed by the United Nation <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

Sustainable Solano works with a simpler, yet comprehensive and accessible One Planet Living framework from our partner, Bioregional <https://www.bioregional.com/one-planet-living>

- One study estimates it would take 5 Earths to support the current human population if everyone’s consumption patterns were similar to the average American. Pressure on the environment will increase unless consumption patterns are significantly adjusted to account for the finite natural resource base. <http://css.umich.edu/factsheets/us-environmental-footprint-factsheet>
 - The Local effects of climate change are being felt across the county, and a strategic plan for mitigation is necessary. Solano County Climate Action Plan (2011): <http://bondaccountability.resources.ca.gov/Project.aspx?ProjectPK=3786&PropositionPK=4>
- The expectation of exponential economic growth is a root cause of our current crisis state. Transition to a regenerative economic structure (“The Next Economy”) is possible and has the potential to bring about substantial positive change.
 - <https://capitalinstitute.org/8-principles-regenerative-economy/>
 - <https://www.fastcompany.com/3020653/creating-a-regenerative-economy-to-transform-global-finance-into-a-force-for-good>
 - Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. <https://www.who.int/about/who-we-are/frequently-asked-questions>
 - Community wealth strategies are designed to draw more dollars into the community — by raising the financial assets of individuals, by increasing the level of “common” assets within a community that are locally owned, and by leveraging the use of funds from institutions that are based in the community (such as city governments and universities) for community-benefiting purposes . <https://community-wealth.org>
 - Healthy Places are communities that are developed, designed and built to promote good health. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/terminology.htm>

- Authentic Demand is operationally defined as: Residents at the policy/decision-making tables, they are informed, have a voice in the decision and are part of and accountable to a constituency.
<https://www.issuelab.org/resource/sustaining-neighborhood-change-the-power-of-resident-leadership-social-networks-and-community-mobilization.html>
- Exposure to green spaces and natural settings results in better outcomes for communities, creating better physical and emotional well-being as well as societal benefits, such as reduced crime:
 - <https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=646413667> (interview with research scientist Ming Kuo)
- Opportunities for connection with neighbors can create spaces for healing racial and social divides and creating "villages":
 - <https://docs.google.com/document/d/10Fs1KZh8Za9C57ZxrF3lgKLLu5iDvhVG3qZlegoXk50/edit> (interview with City Repair Project's Ridhi on community engagement/ intersection repair/painting project)
 - <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B5jm6j8GnCWwR2JUeU9pSjM3b1E> (research paper on intersection repair project)
- Initiatives people can interact with, learn and understand can lead to spreading ideas/starting the conversation to build a different, kinder future:
 - https://www.ted.com/talks/pam_warhurst_how_we_can_eat_our_landscapes (TED talk on what started with edible landscapes and "power of small actions")
- The global transition to regenerative food, farming and land management will help to restore climate stability, end world hunger and rebuild deteriorated social, ecological and economic systems
<https://regenerationinternational.org/about-us/>
- Lack of ultimate meaning in life associated with alcohol abuse, drug addiction and other mental health problems
<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/08/150813092911.htm>
- Depression is one of the most common mental health problems in the world. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between depression, meaning in life and hope. The results showed that there is a significant negative correlation between depression with meaning life & adult hope.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1877042813053937>
- A Sense of Awe and Life Purpose Increases Your Mental Health. Research shows the impact of feeling part of something larger than yourself has positive effect on your mental health <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-new-resilience/201509/sense-awe-and-life-purpose-increases-your-mental-health>

V. Interim Outcomes (5 years)

By 2025:

1. Create at least one demonstration Resilient Neighborhood in every city of Solano County
 - Developed in partnership with each city, including buy-in/alignment/support from local governing bodies, the business sector, and other NGOs
 - Created organically by developing sites in partnership with residents where interest emerges
 - Each city's individual demonstration resilient neighborhood is unique and functions as a testing ground for customized and tailored sustainability elements, partners, indicators, etc. After five years the elements will be revisited and analyzed. Gives us an opportunity to experiment, demonstrate and identify the most promising and successful elements.
2. Establish a robust Leadership and Workforce development program that engages youth from across Solano County in developing and implementing evidence based sustainability/resiliency solutions at the neighborhood level.
 - Develop a strong framework, One Planet Leadership Fellowship, that can be adjusted based on the needs of each hosting organization or event (e.g. summer camp, a few months classroom-based program or an intensive weekend)
 - Pilot different forms in Benicia
 - Seek funding and expand the program to all seven cities of the county, enrolling local use and building green infrastructure projects on the ground
3. Substitute 5% of food spending with locally sourced/produced food on all levels (personal, business, institutions, government)
 - Design and implement a Farm to Institution program (health care institution, schools, local government agencies)
 - Strong public education & awareness campaigns
 - Pilot projects on the ground (e.g. community kitchen in Vallejo or a school-based program)
 - Policy work with county and city leadership

VI. Long-term Impact (10 years)

Solano County has established the foundation of all components of a sustainability framework (water, energy, transportation, food, health, local economy, waste management); active local government involvement; reliable funding mechanisms; and a critical mass of committed citizens actively involved in each area to continue developing and advancing community-based solutions toward sustainability and the good of the whole.

VII. 100-year goal:

Cultural shift, capacity to consider the good of the whole, enlightened freedom.