

Environment & Conservation

Introduction

Anacortes is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty. Residents identify marine shorelines, streams, lakes, forested areas, and other natural features as defining features of the City. Preservation of these natural features is identified by the community as an important priority. This policy is expressed through the goals and policies that support environmental stewardship, protection of habitat areas, and preservation of surface and groundwater quality.

The Environment & Conservation Element addresses numerous sustainability and healthy community goals and policies, including air quality, water quality, tree cover, and sustainable development practices.

The Environment and Conservation Element Supporting Analysis/Background Information contains the background data and analysis for this element.

Goals & Policies

Goal EC-1. Environmental protection. Serve as a leader in environmental stewardship of the natural environment for current and future generations.

Policy EC-1.1. Recognize the inter-relationship of natural systems, people and the economy and promote integrated and interdisciplinary approaches for environmental planning and assessment.

Policy EC-1.2. Work cooperatively with local, state, regional and federal governments and community organizations to protect and enhance the environment. Encourage participation in local and national organizations such as Tree City USA.

Policy EC-1.3. Promote and lead public education and involvement programs to raise public awareness about and involvement in environmental issues, advocate respect for the environment and demonstrate how individual actions and the cumulative effect of a community's actions can have significant effects on the environment.

- A. Establish and promote an ongoing volunteer program in and out of our schools aimed at educating residents and visitors with speakers, programs and written information. This program shall promote stewardship of Fidalgo Island.
- B. Develop and implement a program aimed specifically at reduction of litter and other nuisances.

- C. Support and encourage citizen involvement in backyard wildlife habitat programs, forest education programs, tree preservation, and shoreline stewardship programs.
- D. Water conservation and water recycling shall be high priorities in the City's Water System Plan.
- E. Maintain a continually updated list of City, County and State planning, environmental and development documents at City Hall and the Anacortes Public Library for public review.
- F. Publish and make available information to help private property owners maintain property in its historic or undeveloped state, such as tax benefits, the Nature Conservancy, Skagit Land Trust, City Historic Preservation Board saleback and leaseback, property donation, property exchange, cluster development, and transferrable development rights.
- G. Implement the educational provisions of the Critical Areas Ordinance.

Policy EC-1.4. Actively work with local, regional, and state agencies and private entities, to acquire larger tracts of key open lands in the region, including through such programs as transfer of development rights (TDR).

Policy EC-1.5. Identify/inventory areas of aesthetic, educational, historical, cultural and/or biological significance, encourage their preservation, and regulate development which could cause significant deterioration of these qualities.

Policy EC-1.6. Provide opportunities for residents to have access to undeveloped natural areas where appropriate.

Goal EC-2. Marine waters and shorelines. Enhance and preserve the City's shoreline areas and marine resources while accommodating uses reasonable and appropriate to shorelines.

Policy EC-2.1. Adhere to the goals and policies outlined in the City of Anacortes Shoreline Master Program (ASMP).

Policy EC-2.2. Maintain, enhance and increase the public's physical and visual access to shorelines and tidelands.

Policy EC-2.3. Develop a recreational and wildlife corridor along the Guemes Channel with links to other natural areas including ACFL, Ship Harbor, and Washington Park.

Policy EC-2.4. Work to preserve and restore forage fish spawning areas as shown in the Fidalgo Bay Sub-Area Plan and its restoration element.

Policy EC-2.5. Water dependent and water related uses should be allowed to continue to locate and expand in industrial, commercial, and commercial marine zones.

Policy EC-2.6. Soft armoring of shorelines is generally preferred over riprap or hard armoring.

Policy EC-2.7. Plan to implement shoreline restoration and enhancement projects where natural shorelines have been altered.

Policy EC-2.8. City owned right of ways or street ends that afford access to, or views of, marine shorelines should be evaluated for suitability of street end parks and wildlife corridors, and the vacation of such should be avoided in

most cases. Those street ends which lend themselves to park use should be considered for development as such. The City street vacation policy shall reflect this intent.

Goal EC-3. Natural hazards. Protect people, property and the environment in areas of natural hazards.

Policy EC-3.1. Protect, and where possible, enhance or restore existing shoreline and other flood-prone areas.

Policy EC-3.2. When development occurs within the 100-year floodplain, seek to minimize risk to people, property and the environment.

Policy EC-3.3. Promote soil stability through retention of existing vegetation.

Policy EC-3.4. Manage development in erosion hazard areas to minimize erosion.

Policy EC-3.5. Avoid potential impacts to life and property by strictly limiting land disturbance and development in landslide hard areas.

Policy EC-3.6. Support and promote seismic hazard preparedness efforts.

Policy EC-3.7. Reduce the City's exposure to landslides, tsunamis, earthquakes; minimize reliance on federal and state programs for disaster mitigation; and protect public and private property, save lives, and use community resources wisely.

Policy EC-3.8. Integrate regulatory standards such as buffers and setbacks with hazard avoidance measures.

Policy EC-3.9. Coordinate hazard vulnerability assessments with programs for purchase or preservation of open space.

Policy EC-3.10. Update hazard mitigation and disaster plans a minimum of every five years as a joint effort with Skagit County in coordination with local agencies.

Policy EC-3.11. Coordinate related activities of City departments with the County, State, and Federal agencies.

Policy EC-3.12. Continue to compile and revise mapping of vulnerable areas by using City, County, State, and Federal databases. As additional surveying and other data collection is produced for infrastructure improvements, integrate this information into the mapping system. Update mapped hazard designations based on "real world" information as it becomes available.

Policy EC-3.13. Revise the Zoning, Subdivision, Critical areas regulations and the regulations portion of the Shoreline Master Program to incorporate hazard avoidance provisions and assure consistency of definitions and mapping.

Policy EC-3.14. Continue to update and maintain the City's GIS database inventory of city infrastructure.

Policy EC-3.15. Support public outreach programs to ensure the citizenry is aware of potential natural hazards and emergency procedures that are in place.

Goal EC-4. Water quality. Protect and enhance water quality.

Policy EC-4.1. Work with neighboring jurisdictions and other partners to maintain and restore natural hydrological functions on a drainage basin level.

Policy EC-4.2. Promote the sustainable use of water resources, including conservation efforts.

Policy EC-4.3. Prevent pollution of surface and groundwater resources through regulations, programs and public education.

Policy EC-4.4. Conduct regular inspections and maintenance of City sewer infrastructure according to public works policies to minimize impacts to surface and groundwater.

Policy EC-4.5. Require new development to utilize stormwater best management practices, such as low impact development and other natural drainage techniques.

Policy EC-4.6. Strive to minimize impervious surfaces in the City.

Policy EC-4.7. Encourage the proper use and maintenance of existing on-site septic systems and encourage connection to sanitary sewer whenever possible.

Policy EC-4.8. Protect and preserve areas that are critical for aquifer recharge, such as wetlands, streams and water bodies.

Policy EC-4.9. Strive for “no net loss” of wetland acreage, function and value within each drainage basin over the long term.

EC-5. Fish & Wildlife. Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.

Policy EC-5.1. Identify, plan for and preserve habitat areas, including wildlife corridors and areas with healthy native ecosystems, through development regulations and as part of the Parks, Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Policy EC-5.2. Participate in regional species protection efforts, including salmon habitat protection and restoration.

Policy EC-5.3. Encourage the removal of invasive species and the replanting of natural vegetation.

Policy EC-5.4. With the exception of habitat improvements, stream alterations should only occur when absolutely necessary and should minimize adverse impacts to aquatic life.

EC-6. Surface water. Maintain or improve the functional integrity of water-courses, wetlands, bodies of water and their shores by keeping them in their existing natural condition where appropriate or restoring them as appropriate.

Policy EC-6.1. Streams and wetlands should be examined in a basin-wide approach before adjustments to the system are considered.

Policy EC-6.2. Significant fills and excavations, which by their nature affect both surface and groundwater dynamics and habitat, shall be allowed only by permit process.

Policy EC-6.3. Inventory all significant drainage patterns and make this information available to City planners and residents.

Policy EC-6.4. Place appropriate restrictions on land surface modifications and tree removal that would cause unnecessary landscape scarring, hydrology modifications, erosion, or undermining of support of nearby land, including, but not limited to, dredging, filling, clearing, paving, and grading.

EC-7. Trees. Recognize the importance of mature trees as an integral part of the ecology and heritage of the city.

Policy EC-7.1. Retention of mature trees should be an essential consideration in project development and building plans.

Policy EC-7.2. Encourage regulations which assist in preserving trees and develop regulatory penalties for unauthorized tree removal.

Policy EC-7.3. Education practices will encourage the planting and retention of trees.

Policy EC-7.4. Maintain and enhance a street tree maintenance program on arterial streets and City-owned trees.

Policy EC-7.5. Encourage community residents and property owners to preserve the tree canopy within existing neighborhoods.

Policy EC-7.6. Consider allowing off-site options for replanting and restoration in order to meet tree retention requirements and achieve tree canopy coverage.

EC-8. Sustainability. Increase the sustainability and efficiency of building practices in Anacortes.

Policy EC-8.1. Energy conservation shall be a goal in the design or remodeling of commercial, public and residential building.

Policy EC-8.2. Promote the use of environmentally friendly construction practices, such as those specified under certification systems such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), _____.

Policy EC-8.3. Consider developing incentives for construction or remodeling of structures to utilize state of the art energy conservation techniques (including, but not limited to, insulation, passive energy design, co-generation).

Policy EC-8.4. Encourage projects that utilize green energy strategies and innovative approaches to conserving resources by providing incentives such as flexibility in meeting regulatory requirements.

Policy EC-8.5. Promote sustainable building management and maintenance practices.

Policy EC-8.6. Encourage conversion of existing low-efficiency building stock to cost-effective and environmentally sensitive alternative technologies and energy sources.

Policy EC-8.7. Continue to adopt the latest energy codes.

Policy EC-8.8. Work with Puget Sound Energy to encourage conservation in street lighting and other public and private uses and support programs that encourage renewable energy production.

Policy EC-8.9. Become a leader in innovative energy efficiency and reduction strategies through support and implementation of programs such as the City of Anacortes Community Energy Plan.

Goal EC-9. Air quality.

Policy EC-9.1. Promote compliance with federal and state air pollution control laws and improvements to regional air quality in cooperation with the Northwest Clean Air Agency.

Policy EC-9.2. Maintain high air quality through land use and transportation planning and management.

Policy EC-9.3. Reduce the amount of airborne particulates through a street sweeping program, dust abatement on construction sites, covered loads of hauled materials, and other methods to reduce dust sources.

Goal EC-10. Noise.

Policy EC-10.1. Maintain noise regulations to limit noise to levels that protect the public health and that allow residential, commercial, industrial and manufacturing areas to be used for their intended purposes.

Policy EC-10.2. Ensure that mixed-use developments are designed and operated to minimize noise impacts. Measures may include provisions controlling uses, design and construction measures, and timing requirements.

Policy EC-10.3. Require buffering or other noise reduction and mitigation measures to reduce noise impacts from Commercial and Industrial zones on residential areas.

Goal EC-11. Light Pollution. Reduce light pollution.

Policy EC-11.1. Minimize and manage ambient light levels to protect the integrity of ecological systems and public health without compromising public safety and cultural expression.

Policy EC-11.2. Design and construct night lighting to minimize glare and to avoid spillover onto nearby properties.

Policy EC-11.3. Minimize overhead lighting that would shine on the water surface of the City's shorelines or streams. Encourage the use of pedestrian level or shaded lighting when providing lighting along the Tommy Thompson and Guemes Channel Trail.

Policy EC-11.4. Establish design standards and other regulations, where appropriate, that employ "dark skies" approaches.

EC- 12. Food security. Promote a resilient local food system.

Policy EC-12.1. Support efforts to identify vulnerabilities and formulate strategies to increase food resilience.

Policy EC-12.2. Support community workshops and educational programs regarding local food production.

Policy EC-12.3. Promote increased access to locally-grown foods by providing space for community gardens, encouraging backyard gardens, and encouraging the location of fresh food markets and community food gardens in close proximity to multifamily uses and transit facilities.

EC-13. Climate Change. Anacortes should be a regional leader in mitigating and adapting to climate change.

Policy EC-13.1. Support local community and multi-jurisdictional efforts to raise awareness, address the impacts of, and develop solutions to the challenges of climate change.

Policy EC-13.2. Consider a multi-pronged approach to climate change adaptation and mitigation, including support for energy efficiency (Anacortes Community Energy Plan), promotion of “green energy”, vehicle trip reduction, and environmental protection.

Policy EC-13.3. Advocate for administrative practices, land use patterns, transportation systems, and building practices that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy EC-13.4. Initiate efforts to identify potential local climate change impacts on built, natural and human systems and conduct a vulnerability assessment.

Policy EC-13.5. Promote community resiliency through the development of climate change adaptation strategies.

Policy EC-13.6. Recognize that the information surrounding climate change is constantly evolving and track the best available science to use for planning purposes.

Policy EC-13.7. Consider climate change impacts when conducting review of proposed land use and transportation actions and programs.

Policy EC-13.8. Support local community efforts to raise awareness and develop solutions to the challenges of climate change.