

SUSTAINABILITY (Adopted 1995; Revised 1997, 2004, 2008, 2015) The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos endorses the concept of a sustainable society as a preamble for all of its current and new positions. We define a sustainable society as one that satisfies its own needs without jeopardizing the prospects of future generations. We aspire to make our society more sustainable by preserving and respecting its interdependence with the natural world. A sustainable society protects nature. Our society should offer all individuals a clean environment including pure water, unpolluted air, and sufficient sources of renewable energy to provide for their physical needs. Our society should distribute scarce resources equitably so that conflicts over them are minimized. Every working person should be paid a living wage.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION (Adopted 1965; Revised 1991, 2004, 2008, 2012, 2013) The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos believes that public transportation is an essential element of a sustainable society in so far as it conserves natural resources and decreases pollution. Public transportation is also important economically and socially as an alternative to the current norm of one commuter per car. Public transportation can benefit all citizens including workers, students, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Public transportation should be affordable, convenient and reliable. The County should extend the existing County system and continue to subsidize and support the expansion of the regional system. In order to sustain clean air and healthy ways of living, an emphasis should be placed on developing infrastructure to encourage pedestrians and cyclists. Land use decisions should support this emphasis by promoting higher density mixed-use development.

ENVIRONMENT (Adopted 2012; Revised 2014, 2017, 2024) The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos believes that our natural environment is integral to our community's unique sense of place and to our well-being and prosperity.

- We support protection of this environment, including the canyons and other open space, vistas, wildlife habitat, and dark skies.
- To improve ecosystem health and community livability, we support wherever possible “Green Infrastructure.” EPA defines this as “... an array of products, technologies, and practices that uses natural systems – or engineered systems that mimic natural processes – to enhance overall environmental quality.... Green Infrastructure techniques use soils and vegetation to infiltrate, evapotranspire, and/or recycle storm water runoff.”

Further Guidelines

The LWVLA supports:

- reserving Rendija Canyon for recreational uses only;
- storm water management employing green infrastructure strategies, such as infiltration planters, vegetated swales, tree boxes, and rain gardens;
- adding green spaces with landscaped road edges, medians, parking lots, and pocket parks;
- limiting the use of herbicides in open space areas, as well as along roadsides where mowing and planting native grasses can be as effective;
- a policy of zero increase in run-off beyond the natural rate for commercial and private property;
- encouraging in-fill development and minimizing sprawl;
- continuing to extend the Canyon Rim Trail;

- requiring viewshed analyses as part of the site plan approval processes;
- promoting incentives to increase use of renewable energy while reducing overall energy consumption;
- encouraging or mandating the construction of environmentally sustainable buildings;
- enforcing the County noise ordinance;
- strengthening and enforcing ordinances prohibiting littering and dumping in the canyons and other public land;
- promoting community recycling and composting programs.

The LWVLA believes Los Alamos County should continue to expand

- the use of efficient technology for its operations;
- recycling within its operations, including purchasing recycled and environmentally safe products, and avoiding unnecessary packaging, especially plastic water bottles.

SUSTAINABLE WATER (Adopted 2009; Revised 2012, 2014, 2017, 2021, 2023, 2024)

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos (LWVLA) believes that the goal of our county should be to use no more water than can be produced from our aquifer without depleting it. In order to achieve this goal, decisions about growth must consider water use. Even with the current population in Los Alamos, conservation is essential.

For the sake of the public welfare, the County should be guided in all decisions by the following policies:

- Encourage conservation and efficiency of use.
- Preserve riparian ecosystems and wetlands.
- Preserve public lands, water, and open space.

Further Guidelines

To reduce per capita consumption, we support:

- economic incentives,
- codification of standards for all new construction,
- encouraging conservation practices for existing homes.

We support the County's efforts to apply water efficiency standards in new construction, to reduce leaks, and to irrigate the parks with treated effluent. The Department of Public Utilities (DPU) should educate consumers about best irrigation practices, including how to use gray water, and should provide economic incentives to conserve. We support a tiered rate structure, with rising unit rates as a customer uses more water.

Residential conservation and vigilance on the part of the DPU will not suffice to achieve sustainability. The LWVLA advocates:

- requiring growth or development to be compatible with the availability of water for the indefinite future without requiring the diversion of the San Juan-Chama water;
- careful monitoring and continuing study of the aquifer;
- increased efforts by the County to participate in and assure that regional and state plans are sustainable;

- engaging the public in the water budget process.

The LWVLA recommends that the County

- continues to maintain its quota of San Juan-Chama water until a decision is made to build the infrastructure needed to utilize it, and that any plans for use of the water be designed to minimize the impact on White Rock Canyon.
- engages LANL and neighbors to maintain groundwater supply and quantity.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING (Adopted 1996; Revised 2003, 2008)

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos supports the development and rehabilitation of affordable housing in the county. LWV Los Alamos believes that affordable housing units should be integrated into neighborhoods throughout Los Alamos County. New developments should have a mix of market-rate and affordable units.

We acknowledge that some type of subsidy by the county is required to achieve affordable prices.

Effective methods to keep these units affordable when they are resold must be in place if we are to retain a stock of affordable housing. For instance, land provided as a subsidy could be retained in a trust.

FULLER LODGE (Adopted 1992, Revised 2004)

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos believes that Fuller Lodge should be used primarily for civic and cultural activities. Activities not open to the general public should be charged at a rate comparable to that charged by local businesses for equivalent space. Activities open to the general public should be charged at a lower rate.

The County should continue to be responsible for the maintenance, restoration, and protection of the Lodge.

INDIGENT HEALTH CARE FUND (Adopted 1988; Revised 2004, 2008, 2017)

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos supports the County ordinance establishing the Indigent Health Care Fund, which funds the county’s Health Care Assistance Program through designated GRT monies. Desirable features of such an ordinance include:

- A limit for the amount of reimbursement.
- Provisions for changes in this limit because of changing medical costs or demands on the fund.
- Possible reimbursement of costs beyond hospital and ambulance services.
- Consideration of for-profit health care providers, but with non-profit facilities given first consideration.

LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION: RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS (Adopted 2013, Revised 2021)

LWVLA supports the development of residential neighborhoods that are sustainable and livable. To achieve those goals, we believe that new and redeveloped neighborhoods should be designed to minimize sprawl and impact on the natural environment. Neighborhoods should support a diverse population with inviting streets and public spaces as well as access to public transportation.

Further Guidelines:

1. Where to build (efficient use of land that minimizes sprawl)

- Neighborhoods near the downtown should be compact.
- New development should not consume or fragment important natural habitats or wildlife corridors; it should be avoided on steep slopes or in canyons.
- Redevelopment of “brownfields” and infill are preferred over new development in pristine landscapes. However, existing small neighborhood parks should be maintained or enhanced to reflect the unique character of the neighborhood.
- Neighborhoods should be situated along available public transit lines and within easy access of daily activities.

2. What to build (neighborhood pattern/design)

- Cluster homes to make transit more viable and to create walkable neighborhoods.
- Design streets and pathways for safe and pleasant walking/biking within neighborhoods.
- Include a range of housing types/sizes to support diverse neighborhood population; include a mix of affordable housing within each neighborhood.
- Encourage ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) designs in individual homes to accommodate all ages and abilities.
- Encourage the preservation of the positive character/architecture unique to each neighborhood.
- The developer should include quality parks, trails, and public spaces within each neighborhood; the option of allowing payment in lieu of parks provision should be restricted.

3. How to build (how to manage environmental impacts)

- Reduce storm water runoff and eliminate pollution sources.
- Emphasize energy and water efficiency of streets and buildings; plan orientation of buildings to optimize solar gain.
- Reuse older buildings to reduce energy and resource use as appropriate.
- Encourage building materials that support high indoor air quality and are sourced sustainably.
- Encourage appropriate landscaping based on native and xeric plants; create a streetscape with shade trees appropriate for our climate.
- Minimize light pollution.

EDUCATION (Adopted 2015)

The League of Women Voters of Los Alamos believes that a strong, collaborative relationship between K-12 education leaders and citizens must exist in order for the school district to successfully deliver education services meeting community standards. This belief is consistent with the League of Women Voters expectations for the relationship between citizens and all government entities.

As an elected body, the School Board should actively solicit and weigh heavily community input when making strategic planning and funding decisions. In order for citizens to provide educated and meaningful feedback, they need to be involved in the strategic planning process and have access to information about the district's direction, the issues it faces, and its financial situation. The strategic plan describes how the School Board addresses the needs of the children, including but not limited to academic goals, class size, enrichment programs (i.e., art, music, and athletics), vocational training, special education, and counseling. The strategic plan also discusses the facilities plans, enrollment trends, current financial budget, 5-year financial forecast, community involvement plan, and public communication plan.

In order for the School Board to solicit and incorporate community input into their strategic planning and annual budgeting processes, communication mechanisms need to be created and maintained as an essential part of the board's business activities. Examples of communication mechanisms that achieve this objective are: community surveys; a formal strategic planning process that incorporates citizen input; an Open Forum-type online feedback service; Facebook and other social media; and smaller district meetings between school board members and constituents.

In order for the community to learn about and participate in strategic planning and funding decisions, the School Board needs to routinely provide relevant information to the public as a normal part of the board's business activities. That information would include: issues, options and data provided in advance of decision-making deadlines; reporting on decisions made; and access to key policy documents like budgets and the strategic plan. The LAPS website should be the board's primary communication vehicle. To be effective, it needs to have the following characteristics: easily found, accessible 24x7, and possessing a robust search capability. Examples of other communication mechanisms that can be utilized include: broadcasting board meetings on PAC 8; sending email newsletters to subscribers; using smart phone apps to share information with community members; and using local media to communicate open issues and final decisions. The information presented should be in a format that is understandable to the typical citizen, and be timely and relevant to the issues.

DIGITAL PRIVACY (Adopted 2021)

County government should place a high priority on the privacy of citizens when selecting and using software, digital platforms, digital services, and when contracting for digital work, particularly when these platforms are used to interact with residents. These expectations also extend to those working as sub-contractors for the County.

The County should clearly identify third-party digital services and platforms at the point of use along with links to the privacy and user agreements for the software. However, just linking to a privacy agreement isn't enough; County government should make every effort to use services that don't compromise citizens' privacy.

If a digital platform is known to be intrusive, an alternative, less-intrusive method of receiving the same information or accessing the service should be provided. In this context, for example, most social media are considered to be digitally intrusive and do not qualify as alternatives.