

Section 6:

Regional Sustainability

Introduction

Fort Carson is recognized as a national and international leader of sustainability among military installations because of its long term sustainability goals and accomplishments. At Fort Carson, sustainability is defined as “acting today to meet the needs of the present in a manner that allows future generations to meet their needs.” The post believes that sustainability is an integral part of fulfilling basic Soldier obligations, ensuring that they have:

- The land, water and air resources needed to train;
- A healthy environment in which to live; and
- The support of local communities, both today and in the future.

In 2002 the installation adopted an ambitious set of 25-year goals specifically aimed at promoting sustainable practices. With input and participation from various community leaders, organizations and resource users in El Paso, Pueblo and Fremont counties, Fort Carson developed its sustainability program. Its overarching goal is to integrate sustainability into its daily operations, procedures and policies. In fact, Fort Carson has recently been selected as one of two “net zero” Army installations for energy, waste, and water.¹

Other regional military installations in the Pikes Peak region are also in the forefront of installing and utilizing renewable energy technology and energy efficient design and developing sustainability policies and initiatives. For example, the US Air Force Academy has recently completed a 6-megawatt solar array in partnership with Colorado Springs Utilities.

As identified in the Phase II Growth Plan, reaching some of Fort Carson’s sustainability or the other installations’ goals requires more collaborative off-post community support, assistance, and planning. This is particularly true of the areas that link with the civilian community – including transportation, renewable energy, recycling/waste and energy-efficient building practices.

The Phase II Growth Plan also identified several planning efforts related to sustainability, economic development, and community planning in the Pikes Peak region that are currently underway or are in various stages of implementation. These efforts include, but are not limited to, Operation 60ThirtyFive, Dream City Vision 2020, Quality of Life

¹ “Fort Carson achieves Net Zero status,” Fort Carson Public Affairs Office, April 20, 2011. (<http://search.carson.army.mil/pao-news/PressReleases/Default.aspx?dt=2011>).

Indicators for the Pikes Peak Region, and sustainability plans for the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, Colorado College and the City of Colorado Springs. Many major institutions, governments, businesses and institutions have developed sustainability goals and recognize their needs cannot be achieved in isolation.

The Phase II Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan outlined Fort Carson's sustainability efforts/challenges and recommended the development of a regional sustainability plan to assist the installation in meeting its long-term sustainability goals. The purpose of a regional sustainability plan would serve as a first step for the region in becoming more collaborative, focused, and strategic in its long-term planning.

Pikes Peak Regional Sustainability Project

In early 2009, an ad hoc group of community leaders, sustainability experts and planners, including PPACG staff, came together to discuss the potential need and interest for creating a regional sustainability plan. Initially called Sustainability Action Plan of the Pikes Peak Region (SNAPP), the group recognized that major institutions in the Pikes Peak region have adopted sustainability initiatives or goals and that an overarching regional plan could help leverage resources. The group researched best practices and sustainability plans from other communities in the country and analyzed what processes and plans would work best for the Pikes Peak region. The group determined that the regional sustainability planning effort should emulate the Fountain Creek Visioning Task Force process - a local consensus building effort that involved many of the same local leaders, stakeholders and elected officials and is recognized as a very successful collaborative effort.

After many meetings with stakeholders around the community, in late 2009 Fort Carson sought support for a regional effort through circulation of a Statement of Commitment letter signed by the Garrison Commander of Fort Carson, elected officials, businesses, non-profit agencies, and other military installations in the region. By signing the letter, the signatories agreed to collaborate on the development of a Regional Sustainability Plan. Many additional industry, agency, and individual representatives have since connected with the project and have signed the letter. See Appendix G for a copy of the Statement of Commitment letter with current signatories.

This commitment has resulted in the development of the Pikes Peak Regional Sustainability Project (PPRSP) for El Paso and Teller counties and is facilitated by PPACG. The project has established a process for developing the regional sustainability plan, with input from stakeholders participating in focus groups and a Consensus Committee providing oversight of the planning effort. See Appendix G for an overview of the PPRSP structure and process, as well as current Consensus Committee members and focus group participants.

Phase 1 – Development of Stretch Goals

Once the structure and process for the project were established, PPACG launched Phase 1 of the Pikes Peak Regional Sustainability Project in August 2010 at a kick-off meeting with regional stakeholders, elected officials and the public. Phase 1 was a six-month process involving more than seventy organizations and individuals collectively contributing more than 1,000 professional hours to develop 20-year sustainability “stretch goals” for El Paso and Teller counties. From August to November 2010, PPACG hosted a series of facilitated meetings for six focus group areas (Energy and Water, Materials Management, Built and Natural Environment, Transportation, Economic Development and Health).

Through the focus group meetings, draft stretch goals were developed for transportation, built and natural environment, economic development, energy and water, materials management, health, education, and arts and culture. The stretch goals are intended to be both aspirational and inspirational and push people to move beyond the status quo. The draft goals were reviewed and approved for public review by the Consensus Committee.

On November 18, 2010, Green Mountain Falls Mayor and then-Chair of PPACG’s Board of Directors, Tyler Stevens presented the draft goals to the public at the Southern Colorado Sustainability Conference. Conference attendees completed a survey which was also made available to the public via PPACG’s website. The survey was used to gauge public perception and collect additional comments on the draft goals. PPACG received 188 responses from the public with the majority of people favoring the goals or the project in general.

The Consensus Committee met on December 6, 2010 to finalize the goals based on the public’s input from the surveys and agreed to the next phase of the project, including refinement of the goals, based on identification of indicators and measurable benchmarks to measure progress on reaching the goals.

Regional Sustainability Stretch Goals for 2030

The stretch goals approved by the Consensus Committee in December 2010 address nine focus areas. The goals are listed below.

Energy

By 2030, the region has made considerable progress toward 100 percent sustainable energy usage. Achieving this goal means:

1. 50% of energy consumed in the region is renewable/sustainable, maximizing the amount of renewable energy produced in the region (from a 2010 baseline).
2. Energy use in the region is reduced by 20% (from a 2010 baseline).*

Water

By 2030, the region's water use is met by currently-owned water supply² and is as efficient as possible through application of best management practices. Achieving this goal means:

1. Residential water use is at or below 80 gallons/person/day.
2. Landscaping is efficient, low-water use, or water wise.
3. 80% of commercial and industrial users in the region employ best water management practices.
4. Non-potable water meets 30% of regional water needs.
5. More efficient agricultural water use is encouraged and agricultural water is protected by use of innovative methods to keep ranches and farms producing in the region.

Materials Management and Procurement

By 2030, the region has made significant progress toward a zero-waste future. Achieving this goal means:

1. There is a 70% reduction in solid waste sent to landfills.*
2. Household hazardous waste is minimized, managed, and properly disposed of, as reflected in a substantial increase in drops to regional hazardous household waste facilities.
3. Individual, business, and government purchasing is guided by the tenets of *reduce, reuse, recycle*. All businesses and public institutions have developed and are choosing to follow sustainable procurement guidelines.

Built and Natural Environment

By 2030, the built and natural environments complement one another and reflect our commitment to enhancing the lives of people; promoting community, culture, and commerce; and preserving and protecting the natural environment. Achieving this goal means:

1. New and redeveloped residential and commercial development is built to incorporate walkability, bikability, affordability, efficient high performance buildings, access to parks and trails, access to important services including grocery stores and work places, and access to multiple forms of transportation.
2. Existing communities are incorporating these same concepts as opportunities arise.
3. All residents have access to a sustainable and comprehensive system of parks, open space, and trails.
4. Habitat in the region, including for threatened, endangered, and imperiled species, is restored, protected and preserved.

* This metric will be "normalized" using a standard measure (such as per capita/gross metropolitan product); using this type of standardized scale instead of absolute numbers will enable the goal to be measured while accounting for population or economic growth in the region. The Consensus Committee and Focus Groups will explore options and develop appropriate measures as part of Phase II of the Sustainability Project in 2011.

² This refers to all water rights and supplies that are owned in 2010, even if they have not yet been developed.

5. Indoor and outdoor environmental quality is healthy for all, with air pollutant levels below state and local health thresholds.
6. Ground and surface water quality is better than designated water quality standards and classified uses (recreation, aquatic habitat, agriculture, and/or water supply).

Transportation

By 2030, the region has a sustainable, equitable, and affordable multi-modal transportation system (roads, transit, bicycles, and pedestrian walkways) that efficiently and safely moves people and goods. Achieving this goal means:

1. The region has sustainable, adequate transportation funding for all modes, including regional transit, which is an integral part of the transportation solution.
2. There is increased accessibility, integration, and connectivity between where we live, work, and play.
3. Half of all fuels purchased in the region are sustainable fuels and transportation-related fossil fuel use is reduced by 40% from a 2010 baseline.*
4. All transportation infrastructure is constructed, maintained, and operated using sustainable practices.
5. There is increased reliance on non-single-occupancy-vehicle modes of travel with public transit's share of trips increasing to over 3 percent.

Economic Development

By 2030, the region will have a strong and diverse economy that supports and benefits from sustainability. Achieving this goal means:

1. Gross metropolitan product (GMP) is increasing annually.³
2. Maintain a balanced and diverse economy to ensure economic resilience.
3. Small businesses and entrepreneurial start-ups are increasing annually, with 50% of small businesses/start-ups able to obtain local capital/funding.
4. Essential commodities such as food and energy are produced regionally at an increasing rate.
5. 95% of all households in the region are 20% or more above the regional definition for low income.

Health

By 2030, the region's population is healthy, long-lived, and has a good quality of life. Achieving this goal means:

1. There is an increased emphasis on wellness and healthy living.
2. There is a 30% reduction in sickness, hospitalizations, and preventable deaths (from such causes as obesity, tobacco use, traffic accidents, and substance abuse).

* This metric will be "normalized" using a standard measure (such as per capita/gross metropolitan product); using this type of standardized scale instead of absolute numbers will enable the goal to be measured while accounting for population or economic growth in the region. The Consensus Committee and Focus Groups will explore options and develop appropriate measures as part of Phase II of the Sustainability Project in 2011.

³ GMP is based on the Colorado Springs Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes all of El Paso and Teller Counties.

3. All residents of the region have access to an accessible patient-centered “medical home,” including primary and specialty care, and the region has the provider capacity to meet that demand.
4. Indoor and outdoor environmental quality is healthy for all, with air pollutant levels below state and local health thresholds.
5. Ground and surface water quality is better than designated water quality standards and classified uses (recreation, aquatic habitat, agriculture, and/or water supply).

Education

By 2030, comprehensive, affordable, life-long educational opportunities are available to all. Achieving this goal means:

1. All students have access to a 21st-Century K-12 education that prepares them for the future.⁴
2. Affordable, high-quality early childhood care and education are available to all residents of the region to ensure school readiness.
3. Regional higher education and professional and technical skills training are increasingly available and accessible to residents of the region.

Arts and Culture

By 2030, arts and culture are fully integrated into and contribute to the social and economic vitality of the region. Achieving this goal means:

1. The region offers a diverse and broad range of arts, cultural, and entertainment activities and events. These events contribute to the local economy.
2. The region’s arts scene draws innovative companies and attracts young creatives.
3. The Pikes Peak region will have fully implemented the 2010 Cultural Plan in order to increase economic vitality.

Ongoing Actions and Implementation

The PPRSP process has resulted in the creation and enhancement of many new and valuable partnerships between various entities, and many synergistic opportunities have been identified. PPACG and the regional partners who have participated in the PPRSP have made great strides in developing a solid framework for a successful sustainability plan. It is anticipated that this Plan will help guide regional decision making and planning and will help leverage the region’s various sustainability and long-term planning efforts, including those belonging to the military installations.

PPACG will continue to facilitate the development of a regional sustainability plan in order to assist Fort Carson in meeting its long-term sustainability goals. These efforts are currently underway; the steps in the ongoing implementation process are outlined below.

⁴ 21st Century skills implementation requires the development of core academic subject knowledge and understanding. Within the context of core knowledge instruction, students must also learn the essential skills for success in today’s world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and collaboration.

Phase 2 – Strategy Development and Implementation Plan

The purpose of Phase 2 of the Pikes Peak Regional Sustainability Project, which began in January 2011, is to develop a Baseline Assessment Report, Strategies and Implementation Plan (“the Plan”). The Plan will be a living document containing descriptions of current conditions, benchmarks, indicators to measure progress, measurable strategies and an implementation plan with action steps to ensure successful completion of the strategies.

The Plan will be developed in two steps.

1. Assess current conditions, establish benchmarks, obtain baseline data and develop strategies to achieve the goals previously established in Phase 1. Indicators and benchmarks will also be determined and be used in combination with baseline data to measure progress in achieving the goals.
2. Develop an implementation plan that will consist of the specific implementation steps, target completion date, and responsible entities to ensure successful implementation.

The Plan will enable the region to coordinate efforts, track progress and focus energies on the highest priority activities.

Step 1

Since January 2011, PPACG staff has compiled preliminary baseline data and current conditions related to each of the stretch goals to be assessed and described in the Plan, utilizing existing federal, state and local data in addition to data available from the Quality of Life Indicators Report and other studies. The baseline data and current conditions will help establish measurable benchmarks and strategies and will be assessed and described in the Plan, including existing practices in the region and resources available to help guide the Plan. This step will include:

- Determination of applicable legislation rules, requirements (federal, state, local, agency, site-driven requirements).
- Enhanced understanding of on-going efforts.
- Assessment of existing needs and available data.

After a Phase 2 project kick-off meeting in February 2011, the existing focus groups from Phase 1 were reconfigured into four focus group teams based on similarities identified between the focus group areas and/or goals. The nine focus groups are now reconfigured in the following teams: Red Team (Natural Environment, Water and Air); Blue Team (Transportation, Built Environment and Energy); Green Team (Economic Development, Materials Management & Procurement); and Yellow Team (Health, Education and Arts & Culture).

Since March 2011, the teams have met to review and provide feedback on the preliminary baseline data compiled by PPACG staff, address the specific questions from the Consensus Committee about some of the goals, and begin to identify a set of metrics to be used to measure and track progress in achieving the stretch goals. The teams will continue to meet monthly through September 2011 to identify benchmarks and indicators

and to develop and refine strategies for the goals developed during Phase 1. The Consensus Committee will be responsible for reviewing, refining and approving the recommendations and strategies identified and developed by the teams.

PPACG will compile the work from the teams and develop a draft Baseline Assessment Report and draft implementation plan between October and December 2011. These draft Assessment Reports are available in Appendix G.

Step 2

The implementation plan will list the specific implementation actions that will be taken to ensure successful completion of the strategies developed in Step 1. This will include opportunities for educating and engaging key stakeholders, demonstration projects, and other solutions. The plan will also include target completion dates, responsible entities, and partners in implementation. The Draft Implementation Plan is anticipated to be completed by May 2012. The final report, consisting of the Baseline Assessment Report and Strategy Identification developed during Step 1 and the Implementation Plan developed during Step 2, is expected to be completed by June 2012, pending available funding.