

Sustainable Decision-Making Framework

Executive Summary

This tool is intended to serve as a decision-making framework to support Durham elected officials in evaluating the environmental implications of a proposed action, policy, or project. The framework will help ensure the decisions align with and help progress the city's sustainability goals. The questions in this framework were developed by evaluating twelve other U.S. cities' environmental decision frameworks and adapting to the Durham context by aligning with Durham's Comprehensive Plan. While the questions are accompanied by references to the Comprehensive Plan for context, the complete justification for each question can be found in the accompanying document, *The Inspiration Behind Durham's Sustainability Framework*.

How to Use this Framework

To be most effective, this framework should be included in policy memos written by staff for Durham's City Councilors and County Commissioners. These questions should be completed for each proposed action by staff before the proposal is addressed by decision-makers or advisors. The questions should be fully answered to the best of the staff's ability. The framework is general enough that each question should be applicable to each proposal, even if indirectly. Decision makers should use these answers to decide how to vote or take action on the proposed project, policy, or action.

Required Questions

Question 1: Does this action decrease or increase greenhouse gas emissions?

Comprehensive Plan Reference: Policy 74, Page 93

2021 Carbon Neutrality & Renewable Energy Action Plan (goals on page 13)

Question 2: Who benefits from this action and who is disproportionately impacted?

Will this action further entrench any existing unjust environmental issues or systems?

Comprehensive Plan Reference: Environmental Justice, Page 94

Question 3: How will this action influence:

- a) water quality
- b) air quality
- c) heat islands or their effects
- d) flooding
- e) habitat fragmentation
- f) biodiversity
- g) **Include a summary of the environmental impacts.**

Comprehensive Plan References: Policy 84, 86, 87, 96, 111

Question 4: Will this action impact ecologically sensitive or valuable natural areas or land adjacent to those areas?

Comprehensive Plan Reference: Policy 79, Page 93