

# Making Balanced Decisions

We use the [Sustainable Action Map \(SAM\)](#) as a decision-making guide to ensure we are in alignment with Council’s goal of community livability and the Public Works’ vision of “balance and harmony between people and nature.”

SAM is a simple, easy to use, one page worksheet that is a way for us to optimize a solution, rather than compromise one. The fundamentals of sustainability center on creating solutions that provide balance. Balance includes delivering the level of service citizens expect; doing it in an environmentally and socially responsible way; and insuring the best economic choice for the long term.

SAM has three key dimensions that work together:

1. **NICE:** There are four key components of sustainability - Natural, Individual, Community, and Economy. All four of these components must be in balance to achieve a sustainable solution.
2. **SWOT:** Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats are described for each action (policy/decision) being considered and factored into the final decision.
3. **Green, Yellow, Red Stoplight:** This system provides an indicator for how well a particular action achieves the individual components (NICE) of sustainability.
  - **Green:** The action provides value to that component (more strengths and opportunities).
  - **Yellow:** There are risks, but they are manageable.
  - **Red:** There may be a fatal flaw (many weaknesses and threats). You should consider innovative solutions to overcome these risks before moving forward.

