

Hailey Idaho Sustainability Process
Chat GPT Summary
June 15, 2026

Query: You are on a Sandpoint City Council resident advisory committee for Sustainability. You are researching how other towns with sustainability plans organize their deliberations around making sustainability decisions. You are now investigating Hailey Idaho. How is that city organized around sustainability decisions?

Based on Hailey's current Sustainability & Resilience program and Sustainability Action Plan process, Hailey has developed a fairly structured model that may be particularly relevant to Sandpoint because it combines staff leadership, citizen advisory input, integration with existing city planning processes, and regional coordination. ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

How Hailey Organizes Sustainability Decisions

1. Sustainability is Staff-Led, Not Committee-Led

Hailey's sustainability program is managed by city staff, particularly a Sustainability and Grants Coordinator and planning staff. Sustainability work is embedded across departments rather than assigned to a stand-alone citizen board. Staff coordinate sustainability efforts and report regularly to the City Council. ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

Key functions include:

- Goal setting and performance tracking
- Greenhouse gas inventories and benchmarking
- Energy audits
- Code and policy development
- Grant acquisition
- Regional coordination with neighboring jurisdictions
- Monthly reporting to City Council on progress ([City of Hailey, ID](#))
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2. Sustainability Decisions Flow Through Existing City Processes

Rather than creating a separate sustainability approval process, Hailey integrates sustainability into:

- Comprehensive planning
- Zoning and development code updates
- Transportation planning
- Infrastructure decisions
- Capital improvements
- Utility and water conservation programs ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

This means sustainability is treated as a lens applied to normal city decisions rather than as a separate program. ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

3. Advisory Committees Are Used for Plan Development For creation of the Sustainability Action Plan, Hailey established an ad hoc citizen advisory committee. The committee's role is advisory rather than decision-making. Staff draft materials, and the committee helps:

- Review goals and strategies
- Identify practical implementation challenges
- Evaluate community support
- Suggest priorities and timelines
- Provide feedback before recommendations go to Council ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

A notable feature is that Hailey intentionally recruited both technical experts and ordinary residents with practical experience in relevant sectors. ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

4. Council Remains the Final Decision-Maker

The process appears to be:

1. Staff research and draft proposals.

2. Advisory committee reviews and discusses.
3. Public and stakeholder review occurs.
4. Staff revise recommendations.
5. City Council adopts policy and plans. ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

This keeps the committee focused on advice and consensus-building rather than formal regulatory authority.

The Decision Framework Hailey Uses

Hailey organizes sustainability deliberations around six major topic areas:

1. Energy
2. Built Environment
3. Waste and Circularity
4. Transportation
5. Land and Water
6. Nature-Based Solutions ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

More broadly, their long-standing sustainability program is organized around four focus areas:

1. Energy and the Built Environment
2. Waste Reduction
3. Transportation and Mobility
4. Land and Water ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

Projects and policies are generally evaluated within one of these categories.

A Particularly Useful Feature for Sandpoint

One aspect of Hailey's model that stands out is that sustainability recommendations are not evaluated solely on environmental benefits.

Their Sustainability Action Plan explicitly evaluates actions through multiple perspectives:

- Environmental outcomes
- Economic outcomes
- Social and cultural impacts
- Community health
- Resilience to future risks
- Administrative capacity and feasibility ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

This approach tends to make recommendations more acceptable to elected officials because it frames sustainability as risk management, cost savings, infrastructure resilience, and community well-being rather than only environmental protection.

What Sandpoint Could Borrow

If I were creating a sustainability advisory protocol based on the Hailey model, I would structure deliberations as follows:

Step	Question
1	Which sustainability focus area does this proposal affect?
2	What are the environmental benefits or impacts?

3	What are the economic costs, savings, or risks?
4	What are the social, health, and quality-of-life impacts?
5	Does it improve community resilience and long-term stewardship?
6	Is it feasible given city staffing, budget, and authority?
7	Is it consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and existing city goals?
8	What metrics can be used to measure success?
9	What public engagement has occurred?
10	What recommendation should be forwarded to City Council?

This is essentially the governance structure Hailey is building: staff-led analysis, advisory committee review, public input, and Council adoption, with sustainability considered across all city functions rather than isolated in a single committee. ([City of Hailey, ID](#))

For your investigation template, Hailey would be a strong example of a city using a **staff-driven, advisory-supported, integrated sustainability model** rather than a separate sustainability commission with independent authority. ([City of Hailey, ID](#))