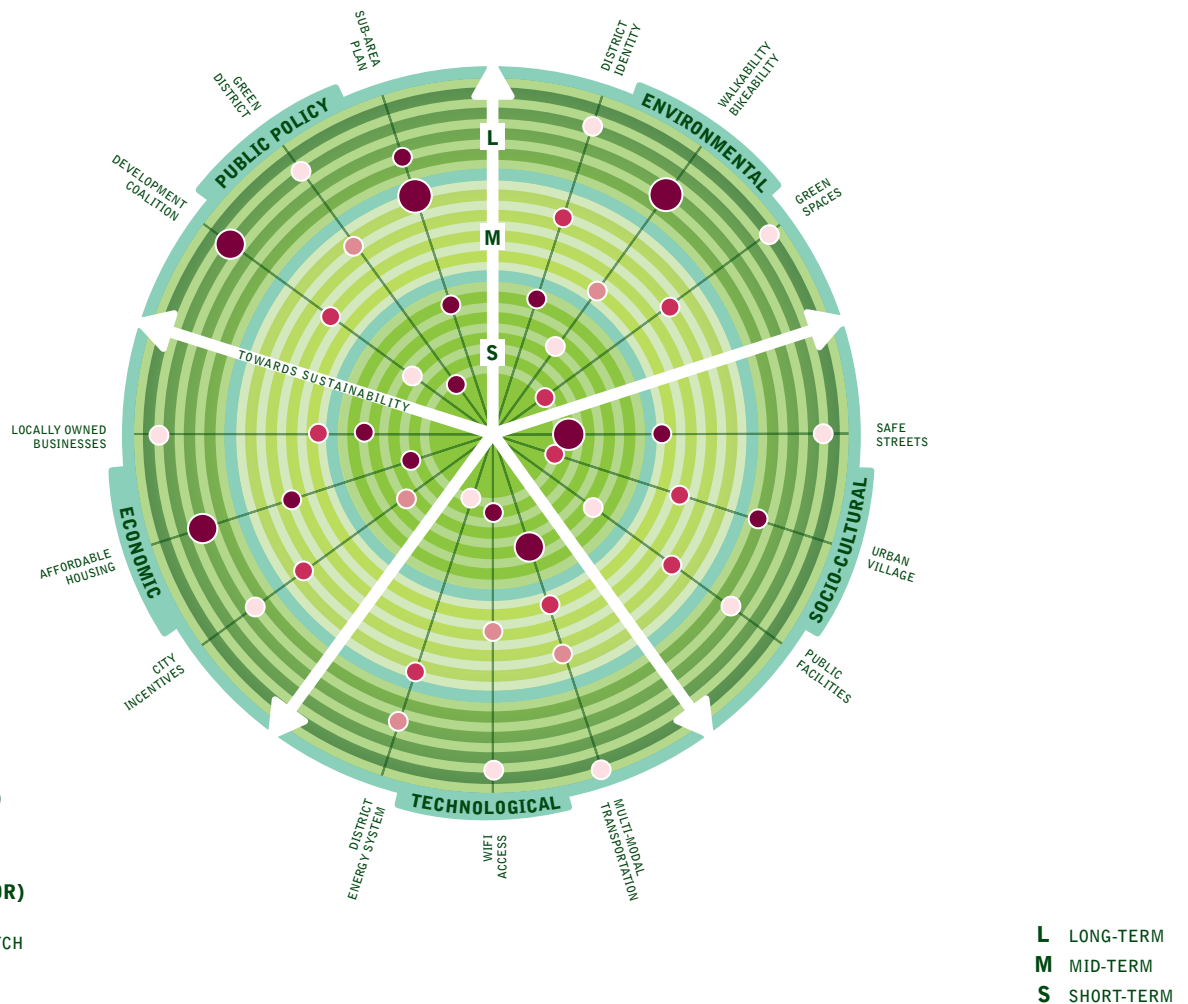# SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS AND THE EcoSTEP^{SM} TOOL

Measuring or projecting the improvement or decline of various quality of life factors over time is clarified using the EcoSTEP^{SM} tool. Symbolizing the cyclical quality and interconnectivity of all living systems, EcoSTEP^{SM} is an effective tool for plotting various sustainability indicators in three term, or time, ranges—short-term (S), medium-term (M), and longterm (L)—each divided into ten time frames that can be defined however the user chooses (i.e. one year, ten years, etc.).

EcoST3P
MEASURING SUSTAINABILITY

PRIORITY (SIZE)
- NORMAL
- URGENT

SEVERITY (COLOR)
- IMPROVING
- CAUTION. KEEP WATCH
- REQUIRES ACTION
- DANGEROUS

L LONG-TERM
M MID-TERM
S SHORT-TERM

In an ideal world, an indicator (for example, water quality), plotted near the outermost ring of each term scale would be considered, or judged to be approaching the best possible outcome or condition for sustainability. In this example, short-term conditions appear to be approaching optimal, yet the relative immediacy of medium and long-term measures indicate water quality challenges that lie ahead. For further detail, the dots plotted on the scale can be color-coded and sized according to the urgency or scale of the challenge of that particular indicator.

The EcoSTEP[SM] tool allows any user to assess hypothetical yet real life situations, or real conditions of design or planning intent, to assess the assumptions for consequences and trade-offs, and to communicate those situations to stakeholders and leadership. By incorporating all five domains the tool is effective both in gauging progress and in revealing the various and complex trade-offs that will occur between indicators. This graphic representation of issues and conditions makes EcoSTEP[SM] an ideal tool for collaborative planning as well as for communicating to leaders and the public a region's progress toward a sustainable vision and quality of life goals.

The Joslyn Institute has applied the tool to a diverse range and scales of built-environment projects, including individual buildings, neighborhood contexts, small communities, districts within cities, and to large regions. By way of examples of the variety of applications of the tool, a September 2006 charrette brought together 150 architects, planners and regional stakeholders to identify growth challenges and opportunities and to envision a sustainable future for a rapidly growing metroplex region.

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