

Quality of life and sustainability in Øvre Eiker

This document has been prepared by a cross-party political task force established on the basis of an unanimous Municipal Council decision in Øvre Eiker municipality on the 4. February 2015. The document is meant to be a guide in the practical work to realize the vision of the highest possible quality of life in a sustainable way for all the inhabitants of Øvre Eiker municipality.

Øvre Eiker municipality shall work to inspire others, nationally and internationally, to promote a new path of development where high quality of life, equitable distribution, sustainable resource use and real participatory democracy take precedence over maximization of monetary values.

Vision for Øvre Eiker municipality

In Øvre Eiker we will concentrate on achieving the highest possible quality of life for all residents in an environmentally sustainable way.

Goals

- The overall goal for Øvre Eiker municipality is ever-higher quality of life for all its citizens in a sustainable way. This must be achieved without reducing the same possibilities for people living in other places on the globe.
- We are going to hand over the Earth to our descendants in a better condition than we received it.
- Human quality of life and sustainability of nature shall be leading criteria for all municipal and private businesses.
- All the basic needs shall to the extent possible be met through the use of short-travelled resources.
- We are going to take care of all our food soil and biodiversity.
- We are going to save all of our most important cultural heritage sites.
- Energy consumption in Øvre Eiker shall be on a sustainable level, and shall to the greatest possible extent be met by renewable energy sources.
- Decisions that apply to the inhabitants of Øvre Eiker shall to the extent possible and meaningful be made by the inhabitants themselves.

By Quality of life we mean:

A community with a high quality of life is a good society

- with a compassionate community where the individuals care about each other.
- where all members feel included and count.
- where everyone has an opportunity to contribute to the community, experience a meaningful life and feel that they mean something for others.
- without major social differences.
- where cultural and human diversity is tolerated and appreciated.
- with opportunities for the unfolding of one's own life.
- where personal freedom is balanced with a commitment to the community.
- where the primary needs can be met by local businesses and own efforts.

High quality of life means great joy of life through good coverage of all the material and non-material needs. The highest possible quality of life is not the same as the highest possible material standard of living in terms of financial income and consumption. Above a certain level it is not necessarily any positive correlation between increased quality of life and increased income.

By Sustainability we mean:

Sustainability must be understood in a global perspective, and implies that nature has intrinsic value and that nature's capacity to provide environmental services must not be impaired. Nature includes everything alive, also people.

Sustainable business will help to lower the pressure on the Earth's carrying capacity, promote an equitable distribution of the Earth's resources, and help to increase people's quality of life.

Decisions should be taken at the lowest possible meaningful level, based on sustainability criteria and Norwegian law.

Instruments/measures

To meet the objective of the highest possible quality of life in a sustainable way, we have so far come up with the following instruments, which are grouped under the two headlines "**Quality of life**" and "**Short-travelled meeting of needs**".

Quality of life:

Participatory democracy

- Our citizens shall have the opportunity to participate actively in the development of the municipality.

- Motivate and encourage all to participation and engagement.
- Local focal points for human contact, nature experience and cultural stimulation. Facilitate good and attractive meeting places for all age groups.
- Intensify efforts to challenge, facilitate and engage residents to greater responsibility for service provision.

Culture

- Give good opportunity of spiritual, cultural and intellectual activities and development.
- Good networking and social contact.
- Stimulate clubs and associations.
- Strengthen, motivate and educate in order to increase the effort to design active local environments.
- The local community's responsibility for their own development.
- Create good opportunities for leisure and relaxation.

Awareness-raising and education

- Create awareness that a lower level of consumption can allow for a higher quality of life and joy of life.
- Arrange courses, conferences, festivals, etc. about various aspects of a development in which a high quality of life can be achieved in a sustainable way.
- Teaching in schools about what high quality of life and ethical and sustainable lifestyles means in everyday life.
- Actions in schools and kindergartens to make it popular with sustainable lifestyles.

Citizens' physical and mental health

- The municipality shall be among the best municipalities in Norway on the national survey of living conditions.
- Measures to reduce the physical and mental health problems among residents.
- Easy access to good and close health care.
- Ensure access to outdoor activities and recreation in residents' close environment.
- Measures for reduced strain from environmental toxins and electromagnetic fields on people and nature.

Protection of nature and the health of the ecosystems

- Create awareness of the fact that man is part of nature and is completely dependent on nature and its health.
- What we produce should primarily come from renewable resources.
- Productive agricultural land is to be maintained. By any downsizing the enterprise in question has the responsibility and must cover the cost of establishing new equivalent topsoil elsewhere in the municipality.
- Stimulate reduced consumption level and changed consumption pattern to take proper care of the Earth's ecosystems.
- Measures to improve the health of nature.
- Encourage the use of eco-labelled, ecologically and ethically acceptable products.
- The municipality sets sustainability standards for all of its businesses. All new projects and initiatives will be subject to a sustainability assessment. Where these in the first place will be financially more expensive options the options with long-term real economic gains must be given priority.
- The municipality will encourage the local business community to set similar standards for their activities and businesses.
- The manufacture of products with harmful effects for humans, animals and nature must be avoided.
- Source separation and short-travelled waste management.

Short-travelled Meeting of Needs

The meeting of material needs through short-travelled production:

- The primary needs shall to the greatest possible extent be met by local businesses and residents' own efforts through the use of short-travelled and local resources.
- The municipality shall facilitate the strengthening of local businesses with the aim of meeting a greater degree of local needs for consumer goods like food, building materials, energy etc. by local production and local and short-travelled resources.
- The municipality shall be a partner in making it easy and profitable to establish and run sustainable economic activities in Øvre Eiker.
- The municipality shall facilitate for commercial areas and jobs in the vicinity of built-up areas.
- Facilitation of export of surplus production.

Short-travelled sustainable food

- Stimulate and facilitate peoples' own local and ecological food production.
- Stimulate the production, sale and promotion of local sustainable food.

- Initiate and further stimulate forum for developing ideas and for collaboration for investments in short-travelled sustainable food.

Short-travelled renewable energy

- Reduction of the total energy need and energy consumption.
- Reduction in the total use of fossil fuels, so that Øvre Eiker municipality will be carbon/climate neutral as soon as possible. Each year the municipality shall come ever closer to this goal.
- Reduction of energy use in municipal buildings.
- Stimulate the shift from fossil fuels to the use of renewable energy sources.
- Stimulate to meet most of the local energy need by local energy production.
- Encourage increased use of wood for heating.
- The facilitation of export of sustainable excess local energy production.
- Øvre Eiker municipality must lead the way with all of its businesses and economic activities.

Sustainable transport

Meeting of needs with short-travelled resource use will lead to a reduction in the transportation needs. This will again reduce transport costs and emissions.

- Further development of public transport to reduce the need for car driving.
- Making Øvre Eiker a bicycle community and making sure that there are good walking and bicycle paths between all the nodes in the municipality.
- Stimulate new ways of reducing the use of cars.

Sustainable house building

- Stimulate the development and construction of houses that are as sustainable and health friendly as possible. Stimulate sustainable and health friendly solutions to construction, renovation and rehabilitation of existing buildings and finding the best overall solution in each case.
- Initiate and further stimulate forum for developing ideas and for collaboration for investing in sustainable building activities.

The above list of instruments and measures to promote the vision of Øvre Eiker is only a beginning of this long-term work. We strongly believe that many new ideas and initiatives from the people of Øvre Eiker will be created and taken as we work to make the vision come true.