



Sustainability Planner

Job description

Focus on **integrating sustainability practices** and considerations into land use and development projects. Assess environmental impacts, ensure compliance with regulations, and develop **sustainable solutions to balance development with environmental preservation**. Junior planners typically assist with research and documentation, while senior planners **lead projects, provide strategic guidance**, and **manage teams**.

Salary

Entry — \$49,000

Middle — \$72,852

Top — \$118,000

Core tasks

- Conduct environmental assessments and impact studies, ensuring adherence to regulations.
- Collaborate with project teams to integrate sustainable practices into planning and design.
- Engage with stakeholders and agencies to ensure transparency and build collaborative relationships.
- Monitor compliance with regulations and develop mitigation strategies.

Workplace/Environment

- **Work hours:**
Approx. 40 hours/week
(At times, overtime work may be required to meet deadlines).
- **Environment:**
Typical **office**, **travel** to project sites and to visit.
- **Travel:**
To work sites.

Education / Prerequisites

Education level:

BA/BS in Environmental Science, Planning, Sustainability or a related field.

Licensing:

Depends; can obtain Architect license (RA, AIA) or Planner license (AICP).

Preparation for the role:

3+ years of experience in environmental planning or a related discipline. Strong knowledge of environmental regulations and permitting processes.

Experience

Soft skills:

- Strong leadership.
- Passion for environmental sustainability.
- Communication.

Technical skills:

- Data analysis and visualization tools.
- Sustainable design principles.
- Basic understanding of environmental impact assessment.



Career path: Olivia Rother

About me

Sustainability Planner at Sound Transit

Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies
Seattle University

High school

In high school, I had a lot of different ideas about what I wanted to do — I could have become a teacher, a surgeon, or even a professional chef. I found that it's totally okay to have many interests, especially in high school and college, because it's a great time to explore and figure out what you really enjoy doing.

College choices

Going to college was always part of my plan. I started at Michigan State because of their great education program, and for a while, I thought I wanted to be a teacher. But after exploring a few different majors and career options, I transferred to Seattle University and got a degree in Environmental Studies, focusing on politics, policy, and nonprofit leadership.

In college, I completed several internships with local organizations. Each job, class, and experience helped me build skills that shape what I do today. My path has been a mix of great fits and lessons learned along the way, but every experience brought me closer to where I am now.

A defining moment

One moment that really stuck with me was hiking with my dad on the Manitou Islands in Michigan. I found a giant puffball mushroom and was about to step on it to release the spores when my dad stopped me. He said, "If you step on that, no one else will get to see it." That early childhood moment stuck with me and helped me learn how important it is to protect the environment — it's a shared resource, and if we don't each take care of it, future generations won't have the chance to enjoy it as we do. Spending my career working on projects to help protect the environment is incredibly meaningful to me.

About my job

"There's no perfect solution that lasts forever, but the goal is to create flexible ideas that can change as we learn."

Benefits:

- Seeing projects come to life: Watching sustainability projects shape new infrastructure and create opportunities for the community.
- Making a positive impact: Contributing to meaningful work that benefits the environment and local community.
- Collaborative environment: Working with a really great team that supports personal and professional growth.

Challenges:

- Slow pace: Government work can sometimes move slowly, with more steps and approvals needed to get things done.
- Managing multiple stakeholders: It can be tough to balance opinions and priorities from many sources.
- Dealing with complex processes: Government structure often means dealing with complex processes and regulations.

Expertise

- Managing a grant program focused on efficiency and sustainability, using a lot of project management skills.
- Writing documents, proposals, and supporting the strategy team with planning and decision-making.
- Collaboration and working across teams to achieve goals.

Office work

- Primarily working from home in a hybrid office setup.
- Occasionally attending events or talking to students, but there's little to no field work involved.

Skills

- Project management: Coordinating and leading projects.
- Collaboration: Working with diverse teams to achieve shared goals.
- Communication: Writing clear documents for various audiences.
- Strategic thinking: Supporting planning and decision-making.
- Problem-solving: Managing and overcoming obstacles.

Education

- Earned a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies from Seattle University.
- Completed certificates in Project Management and Change Management from the University of Washington.
- Certifications, including LEED Green Associate and Envision Sustainability Professional.

The future of Sustainability

"Sustainability isn't just about personal choices; it's about transforming industries."

"Sustainability is a fast-changing field, and it's tough to say exactly where it's headed. That said, some trends are becoming clear. The pandemic really changed how we live and work — fewer commutes meant less traffic and pollution, and that shift opened up new conversations about how we design cities and move around sustainably.

Reaching net-zero emissions continues to be a big goal, and it's not just about individual actions — organizations of all kinds need to take responsibility for their environmental impact. With policies and public pressure pushing organizations to improve their practices, it's a tough challenge, but a crucial one to take on.

Organizations are also realizing that sustainability isn't just a box to check; it's also good for business, helping them save money, stay resilient, and remain competitive. By focusing on big-picture sustainability — such as how products are made, used, and reused — we can make more change than through individual actions alone."

About Sustainability Ambassadors

We are here to **RAPIDLY ADVANCE A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**. Empowering **YOUTH** to catalyze community sustainability, **TEACHERS** to integrate rigor with relevance for real-world impact, **COMMUNITY** to drive collective impact.

We support a year-round training program for over 60 highly motivated middle and high school youth, a Teacher Fellows Program, City-County CAP internships, and college-level interns, and work with hundreds of educators to design new models of problem-based, place-based learning around **a shared vision of educating for sustainability**.

Your green jobs future

Ready to explore your future in green jobs? Use [Map your Career](#) to map your trajectory!

Find career opportunities near you now! Use [Career Connect - Washington's](#) tool to find programs to build your career skills.

Interested in a future in solar? Take a look at the [Solar Jobs Census](#) to track solar job growth nationwide.

Explore [RVC's opportunities](#) to work with organizations led by communities of color.

Dive into the [Center of Excellence for Clean Energy's](#) robust career tools in the sustainable energy sector.

Grow your professional sustainability skillset with the [Seattle Youth Good Program](#).

See Seattle's [Clean Energy Resources Map](#) to examine what the city is planning for a greener energy future.

Check out the [U.S. Green Building Council](#) to explore the sector's current opportunities.

Funder acknowledgement



King County

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Wastewater Treatment Division

