

Integrated Community Sustainability Planning - A Background Paper

Planning for Sustainable Canadian Communities Roundtable

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the key goals of the Government's New Deal for Cities and Communities is to achieve real, measurable progress toward the economic, social, environmental and cultural sustainability of Canada's cities and communities. To achieve this, municipalities and First Nations (FN) must first have the capacity to understand and adopt sustainable planning principles, and then the ability to implement them.

The gas tax agreements currently being negotiated and signed across the country include a clause that requires the provinces/territories to ensure that their municipalities (or regional authorities as deemed appropriate) develop integrated community sustainability plans (ICSPs).

The requirement for municipalities to develop ICSPs was designed to accelerate the shift in local planning and decision-making toward a more **long-term, coherent and participatory approach to achieve sustainable communities**. ICSPs have been identified as a means to help cities, communities and First Nations (FN) to effectively plan and manage their assets and resources to achieve identifiable outcomes, deliver services and address priorities within an integrated framework encompassing the economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions of community sustainability.

Since communities across the country are going to develop and implement ICSPs, the Government of Canada is interested in building partnerships and facilitating a national dialogue on ICSPs. The gas tax template agreement includes a general definition of ICSPs that does not provide municipalities with enough information to actually undertake the process to develop ICSPs:

“a long-term plan, developed in consultation with community members, that provides direction for the community to realize sustainability objectives it has for the environmental, cultural, social and economic dimensions of its identity.”

Some communities across the country already have community plans that encompass some or all of the characteristics of ICSPs. In addition, there are a growing number of communities expressing interest in long-term community sustainability, and there are a number who have started developing sustainability plans. Building on existing efforts and processes will help to facilitate the shift towards long-term integrated planning, and allow communities to recognize the benefits of ICSPs.

1.1. Purpose of Paper

This document has several objectives, with the primary goal being to provide background information that provinces/territories, municipalities, FN and stakeholders can utilize to enter into an informed dialogue and discussion on ICSPs. The thoughts, ideas and principles outlined in this document are only the launching point for further iterations that will occur as the concepts are discussed, debated and refined.

The development of the principles and guidelines for ICSPs itself is a collaborative process. The federal government, the provinces/territories, municipalities and key associations, and non-governmental organisations have a key role in developing and implementing the ICSPs and as such, their views and ideas are central to the long-term success of this initiative.

This document also has a number of other objectives including:

- Gain a better understanding of the key barriers to developing and implementing sustainable community plans.
- Provide principles for this transformative approach to planning.
- To provide guidance for the development and implementation of individual ICSPs across the country

2. THE NEW DEAL FOR CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

The New Deal for Cities and Communities will make a real difference for the sustainability and future prosperity of our cities and communities, and for Canada's future. The Government of Canada, together with its partners, seeks to obtain agreement on a long-term vision of what we want our cities and communities to look like in the future. That vision integrates four dimensions of sustainable development at the community level: economic, environmental, social and cultural.

2.2 The Gas tax Agreements and the ICSP commitment

As part of one of the steps of the New Deal, the Government of Canada has committed \$5 billion in funding over the next five years. The Government recognizes that cities and communities across the country have an important role to play in the long-term viability and strength of the nation and, as such, it has a role to ensure that cities and communities are both strong and sustainable.

The gas tax agreements that are currently being negotiated and signed with the provinces/territories, municipalities and municipal associations include a commitment to develop ICSPs at the local level. The agreements permit municipalities to use a portion of their gas tax allocation to develop the plans by the end of the agreement.

2.3 The Benefits of ICSPs

ICSPs attempt to offer a new perspective of the traditional methods of community planning. Through the use of a participatory process that seeks to integrate and to share knowledge and solutions, communities can better understand their future and work collectively towards achieving their goals. The development and implementation of ICSPs have several different objectives:

2.3.1 Cost Savings

Effective policy integration and good long-term planning can save resources and, therefore, money. Improvements in infrastructure services and cost savings can also be made through practices such as “life cycle” costing of assets such as buildings, roads and sewer systems. The development and implementation of integrated asset management plans that include demand management can result in increased longevity of the asset, less disruptions to the services and increased returns on investments.

2.3.2 Enhanced Capacity to Meet Community Needs

Municipalities are more likely to meet the needs of their communities by taking an integrated approach and dealing seriously with the answers to questions such as: - What does this community value?

- What do we want to leave for the next generation?

- How will we achieve our goals?

2.3.3 A Strong And Creative Community

By seeking to address economic, environmental, cultural and social issues, an ICSP encourages creative solutions—for example, providing opportunities for attracting new future-focused industry (such as energy efficient manufacturers or industries that uses new technologies or recycled materials) to increase sustainable jobs in the area.

2.3.4 Managing Change More Effectively

Local authorities are always faced with change. This includes increased community expectations, delegation of powers from higher levels to local government and revenue limitations. An ICSP can help municipalities deal with change. An ICSP is a cohesive approach, bringing together future planning needs with new structural realities. It allows a local council and its community to develop a locally appropriate means of managing change towards a desired future.

2.3.5 More Effective Policy Development

Improved planning and different corporate structures are likely to result from the long-term focus of the ICSP and its emphasis on the integration of environmental, economic, cultural and social policies and community involvement. With sustainability as the goal, reconciling the competing pressures for economic development, environmental protection, cultural expressions and a more equitable society should be a priority for the community.

2.3.6 Greater Community Cohesion

Involving people in collective decision-making about the future of their community can go a long way to fostering a sense of common purpose and building social capital (bridging and bonding ties), particularly among a diverse citizenry. While community ownership of an ICSP will not solve complex social issues and tensions, inclusive community planning processes

reinforce democratic dialogue and civic engagement that are at the foundation of cohesive communities.

2.3.7 Stronger Regional Links

Sustainability requires cooperation across the many organizations that are responsible for related issues such as air quality, transportation, economic development, cultural activities and so on. Regional links must be developed and nurtured to address issues that extend beyond the political boundaries. The development of innovative regional collaborative planning efforts can lead to benefits in other areas.

2.3.8 Staying Relevant

The ICSP provides the opportunity to capture the imagination of the local community. Rather than just servicing the community, local authorities can play a greater role in community development.

2.4 Roles of Partners

New partnerships will help to develop strategic alliances that will result in better places to live and more sustainable communities. Building on this concept of collaboration and cooperation, each level of governance also has an important role to play in the development of ICSPs.

2.4.1 Government of Canada

One of the project categories eligible for funding under the gas tax is the development and implementation of ICSPs. In addition, the Government is undertaking to engage interested partners and stakeholders in a national discussion on the principles and parameters for the development and implementation of ICSPs. This discussion paper is the first step in a dialogue through which Canadians will be able to voice their opinions on what these plans should be, how they should be developed and how they should guide their community's path to the future.

2.4.2 Provinces/Territories

The provinces and territories, as the legislators of municipal governments, play a key role in supporting this initiative through complementary efforts. As stipulated in section 92(8) of the Canadian Constitution, municipal affairs come under the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. Municipalities are created by provincial/territorial legislation, and it is this general legislation that defines what they can do, how they are managed, and their sources of revenue. This legislation also regulates the municipal electoral system and controls the powers of municipalities to draft regulations and by-laws.

Given their links to, and responsibilities for municipalities, it is clearly within the interest of the provinces and territories to build stronger, more sustainable and stable communities. The provinces/territories also have the expertise in designing policy frameworks and guides for municipal planning that will prove invaluable to the success of ICSPs.

2.4.3 Municipal Associations

Municipal associations, both national and provincial/territorial, play key roles in the dissemination of information to their members and in providing a unified municipal voice to upper levels of government. As representatives of the interests of their member municipalities, municipal associations will help to inform the discussion on the guidelines and principles for ICSPs. The FCM has been a leader in municipal sustainability initiatives in Canada for years and offers valuable knowledge and experience. The provincial/territorial associations are becoming active participants in the dialogue as well and will provide excellent local knowledge and information.

2.4.4 Municipalities

Local governments are powerful actors in their communities. They build and maintain infrastructure that is essential for economic activity, they set standards and regulations, they procure services and products, provide a number of services for their local citizens, and are the most direct public link to citizens. The concept of the ICSP is being promoted to assist Canadian communities in their drive to become more successful and vibrant. Given the appropriate responsibilities and resources, municipalities play the most significant role in developing prosperous, healthy and secure communities by engaging their citizens in a discussion of the future.

2.4.5 First Nations

There are over 600 self-governing and on-reserve First Nation communities across Canada with varying degrees of land management, governance and natural resources management. Given that First Nation lands remain federal land regardless of their being self-governed or not, integrated planning remains under federal jurisdiction, specifically that of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND).

Under the auspices of the *Indian Act*, DIAND produces regulations, guidelines, best practices, policies and programs dealing with issues associated with integrated planning on-reserve and crown land set aside for First Nations. In an effort to improve land management and environmental management in First Nation communities, DIAND provides two programs which provide capacity training and various components of integrated community sustainable planning to First Nation communities: First Nations Land Management Initiative (FNLMI) and Reserve Land and Environment Management Program (RLEMP). In addition DIAND is working on developing a national framework that would guide community planning for FNs.

2.4.6 Other NGOs and Professional Associations

NGOs and professional associations may provide a direct link to specific sector expertise that may be useful to consider when developing ICSPs.

3. MUNICIPAL PLANNING IN CANADA

The scope of municipal planning is determined by a variety of factors, including: political jurisdiction, limits in legislative authority, the professional standards of key management disciplines, technology and financial resources. These limitations may prevent the consideration of many social, cultural, economic and environmental developments that are outside municipal planning responsibility (e.g., national infrastructure projects, immigration, labour market integration, trade). As the impacts of these developments increase, the lack of methodological consideration of such impacts in municipal planning can negatively affect the community.

The purpose of integrated community sustainability planning is to broaden the scope of factors considered in municipal planning and decision-making. The development and implementation of community plans has been proposed as an important process that can assist cities and communities to translate knowledge, concerns and hopes into action. Moreover, community plans serve to enable cities and communities to plan and manage their assets, services and resources in order to achieve identifiable outcomes, deliver services and address their priorities.

3.1 Types of Municipal Planning

When people talk about urban or municipal planning, they generally refer to land use planning. Planning in this context is a firmly established institution that is guided by provincial statutes and municipal by-laws, administrative regulations, negotiations and business relations. The process variously involves municipal officials, politicians, planning and architectural design professionals, community groups and individual citizens.

The land use planning system consists of a set of procedures for drafting plans and determining applications for development. The objectives and scope of the system are determined by government policy and local interpretation. Very little is specified as to the scope and content of planning policy, other than its regulatory focus, which is usually on land use.

The land use planning system is centrally concerned with the amount and location of development, along with its characteristics. Land use plans provide the framework within which the criteria for making regulatory decisions are established. They are intended to link decisions about land to economic, social and environmental considerations as well as providing a means of coordinating and regulating the flow of development projects.

However, there are many other different types of planning processes that occur at the municipal level. Some are closely tied to land use planning while other focus on other things such as the financial resources and fiscal reality of the municipal administration.

Transportation planning is perhaps the most closely aligned with land use planning. There is a direct, well-researched connection between the density of a community and its transportation characteristics. Transportation planning can be described as a continuing, comprehensive and collaborative process to encourage and promote the development of a multimodal transportation system to ensure safe and efficient movement of people and goods while balancing environmental and community needs.

Some local authorities use asset management tools to plan their infrastructure investments. The planning horizon is usually quite short—5 to 10 years even though the planning is done for systems that can have a life exceeding 75 such as wastewater collection systems. Furthermore, long-term infrastructure plans are rarely integrated with other community planning processes.

Environmental plans are often developed by municipalities in order to better understand the impacts that the community has on the ecological integrity of its ecosystems. Economic development planning is characterized by the desire to provide employment opportunities to local residents, and financial planning is an activity undertaken by municipalities to assess its fiscal viability and to determine the scope of its future investments. All in all, municipalities usually undertake several different types of planning exercises but, unfortunately, these are often not integrated sufficiently.

3.2 Provincial/Territorial Context

Municipal planning, as it is governed by provincial/territorial legislation, differs in each jurisdiction across the country. Some provinces/territories have well-established frameworks and guidelines for planning processes and plan content, while other jurisdictions provide their municipalities with less direction. According to recent research performed by ICURR, only three jurisdictions—Quebec, Manitoba and the Yukon—require an official plan for all of their municipalities. In Alberta, all municipalities with a population of more than 3500 must prepare plans, and in Ontario, municipalities identified by the provincial government are required to have official plans. In all other jurisdictions, community planning is generally an optional process.

It should be noted that, much like at the federal level, numerous different departments maintain responsibility on issues affecting municipal affairs. Generally, P/T departments of municipal affairs possess legal responsibility for municipal legislation, but various other departments manage programs or issues relating to municipalities, such as housing, environment, infrastructure, economic development, transportation.

Recently, several provinces and territories have increased their focus on addressing community sustainability. Some provinces and territories have revised their planning and/or municipal acts in recent years, and have usually incorporated some notion of sustainability. Many of them have provided supportive policy frameworks and planning guidelines to assist their municipalities in preparing for community sustainability. Other jurisdictions provide support in other ways by assisting municipalities to obtain the expertise and knowledge required to develop effective plans. Overall, there is a significant variety in the scope and scale of these efforts.

3.3 First Nations Context

Currently there is no defined concept or process for community planning within First Nation communities. However, some First Nations are moving forward on innovative planning processes that incorporate conventional community planning with traditional aboriginal practices. In addition, DIAND is also moving forward on developing a Comprehensive Community Planning framework to guide the development of a departmental strategy they support First Nations in their development and implementation of comprehensive community plans, and to potentially create strategic linkages to departmental plans and programs

DIAND has created two programs in order to improve land management and environmental management in First Nation communities. The first program, the First Nations Land Management Initiative (FNLMI), provides participating First Nations the opportunity to establish their own regimes to manage their lands and resources, in a sustainable manner that accelerates economic development, enforces environmental management and legislation, and enables greater decision-making at the local level.

The second program, Reserve Land and Environment Management Program (RLEMP) empowers First Nation communities to develop and sustain land, natural resources and environmental management expertise. It also establishes mechanisms for First Nations to be involved in a broader spectrum of activities pursuant to the *Indian Act*, including community land use planning, environmental management, reserve land and natural resources management, and compliance.

4. SUSTAINABILITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development has become a phrase used by various people, groups and organisations to define a multitude of different goals, objectives and processes. The term sustainable development was originally used and defined in reference to the protection of natural resources, but is now used in a variety of manners. This has led to greater confusion and some environmentalists claim that the term has become worthless.

A small, but ever increasing, number of local governments have begun to interpret what sustainable development means for their communities, and how this context can be applied to their planning process and outcomes.

4.1 History of Sustainable Development

The concept of sustainable development was introduced by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 and focussed primarily on the need to balance environmental and economic concerns. As such, most of the work that has been undertaken in the past 15 years has focussed on addressing environmental concerns against the backdrop of economic growth.

Sustainable development is development that meets the **needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations** to meet their own needs ... sustainable development is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the

exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs.

World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987

The Brundtland Commission also articulated the essential principles, which would lead to better balance between development and environment. The first of these requirements is that of *equity*: sustainable development requires that basic needs and common aspirations be fulfilled throughout the world. Poverty is a prime cause of environmental degradation, and the existing condition of extreme inequity must be drastically reduced, if not eliminated.

The second principle is that of *integrity*: our planet provides us with all that we require to fulfil our needs. However, improper exploitation of resources has led to our precipitous position. Ways must be found to integrate concern for the natural environment into wider economic, social and political concerns.

The final requirement is that of *responsibility*: resources must provide not only for present use but also for future needs. The use of a short-term vision has led to delinquent exploitation. Responsibility for both future generations and for the less fortunate must become part of the fundamental frame of mind in which decisions are made.

4.2 The New Deal and the Four Dimensions of Sustainability

In Canada, sustainability is founded on development as a qualitative concept, incorporating notions of improvement and progress, which includes cultural and social, as well as economic and environmental dimensions. It has been recognized that as Canadian communities become increasingly diverse, culture plays an important role in building social cohesion, a sense of community and a shared value set that is rooted in local diversity. Cultural investments can reinforce place-based community development objectives related to employment and innovation, neighbourhood revitalization and environmental sustainability.

Canada also increasingly recognizes the central importance of linking innovation strategies and economic cluster-building with those focussing on labour market integration of at-risk groups, in particularly recent immigrants, youth and the country's urban aboriginals, as key to sustaining economic growth and competitiveness. Harnessing a community's labour pool in its entirety will clearly lead to social, as well as economic, sustainability outcomes by ensuring that no one is left behind as the country's quality of life and standard of living improve.

The Prime Minister's External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities, which former British Columbia premier Mike Harcourt chairs, has been tasked with providing the Prime Minister with recommendations and advice as part of the government's New Deal for Canadian cities and communities.

One of the Committee's first tasks was to develop a long-term vision on the role cities and communities should play in sustaining Canada's quality of life. Over a series of initial meetings, the Committee developed a shared vision of Canadian cities and communities as:

...sustainable places of exceptional beauty, neighbourliness and prosperity, rich in ideas, confidence, diversity, creativity and innovation, where all people are included economically, socially and politically.

The Committee elaborated on its basic vision with the following hopes and expectations:

Canada's cities and communities will be models of environmental, economic, social and cultural sustainability, and they will:

- *Sustain vibrant economies where all people can realize their full potential;*
- *Minimize their ecological footprint;*
- *Attract and retain talented people, and encourage creativity and entrepreneurship;*
- *Foster respect for one another, inclusiveness, kindness and human dignity;*
- *Include new arrivals with grace and speed;*
- *Have buildings and public spaces that are beautiful and accessible;*
- *Build on their distinctive human, cultural, historical and natural characteristics;*
- *Ensure a civil and peaceful society for all people;*
- *Be places where people take personal responsibility for the success of their community.*

This vision takes practical form with the recognition that Canada's communities and orders of government are interdependent, so that respect for jurisdiction is a basic starting point for any future initiative.

4.2.1 Environmental Sustainability

Sustainability is the capability to equitably meet the vital human needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, by preserving and protecting the area's ecosystems and natural resources. In this sense, sustainability describes a condition in which human use of natural resources, required for the continuation of life, is in balance with Nature's ability to replenish them.

However, humans are depleting and degrading many resources faster than Earth's natural systems can replenish them, and human consumption continues to grow every year. Planning for sustainability requires a systematic, integrated approach that brings together environmental, economic, cultural and social goals and actions directed toward the following four objectives:

1. Reduce dependence upon fossil fuels, extracted underground metals and minerals.
2. Reduce dependence on chemicals and other manufactured substances that can accumulate in Nature.
3. Reduce dependence on activities that harm life-sustaining ecosystems.
4. Meet the hierarchy of present and future human needs fairly and efficiently.

Ideally, environmental sustainability requires the maintenance and enhancement of a variety of natural habitats and cultural landscapes. In addition, there is a clear need to minimize urban sprawl through a more compact urban form, which can be achieved through better use of existing infrastructure, or re-thinking how infrastructure services are delivered, and land. Infill development, reurbanization and brownfield redevelopment leading to higher densities and mixed use are among the many tools that can be used to achieve this objective. Related to this is the need to reduce reliance on the car through encouragement of alternative modes of transportation such as walking, cycling and public transit.

4.2.2 Social Sustainability

Social sustainability emerged as a fundamental component of sustainability, with the recognition that environmental sustainability is unattainable without accompanying social justice. Community social sustainability is a process of community development, supported by policies and institutions that ensure harmonious social relations, to enhance social integration and improve living conditions for all citizens. The redistribution of resources, as well as equal access to the means by which to fulfill basic human needs, including housing, employment, public facilities and services that are all central to social sustainability.

Social sustainability can be defined as the highest attainable level in living standards measured against the lowest negative impact on the environment, culture and the economy. More specifically, social sustainability within cities and communities across Canada means that the following conditions are present:

- The basic needs of citizens with respect to food, shelter, education, work, income and safety are met;
- Access to opportunities are distributed equitably and fairly across society;
- There is an environment of conviviality, wherein citizens live together harmoniously and in mutual support of each other; and
- Individuals have the opportunity and are encouraged to participate in civic processes (formal and informal).

Social ills—such as poor education, racism, joblessness, broken families, drug abuse and crime—all reinforce one another, thereby perpetuating a cycle of poverty, inequality, violence and despair. These conditions are significant barriers to supporting or attracting businesses and civic institutions necessary for a healthy community, and they possibly put at risk our future prosperity if a growing number of residents are not given the opportunity to participate fully in the economy.

The social challenges facing cities and communities are complex not only because they are intricately entwined with economic, environmental and cultural issues, but also because they manifest themselves differently across cities and communities. For example, in Canada's largest cities, the social challenges (homelessness/housing, diversity, distressed neighbourhoods, gangs) are quite different than those in smaller communities (accessibility to programs and services, youth emigration). Similarly, there are issues of particular importance to regional and local

areas—such as Aboriginal issues in the West; immigration integration in Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal; and the attraction of immigrants to smaller communities.

4.2.3 Cultural Sustainability

When compared to the other three dimensions of sustainability, cultural sustainability objectives are probably the least defined and, to a large extent, are the least resonant with decision-making leaders facing more immediate pressures such as infrastructure, transit and housing. Despite increasing diversity in communities, the longer-term benefits of culture in terms of promoting community identity and cohesion are difficult to quantify and therefore less evident to municipal decision-makers.

Many cities and communities have invested in arts and heritage as an important element of their revitalization and renewal strategies. Cultural tourism is also on the rise and is increasingly linked with community branding and economic development initiatives.

With the current popularity of urban thinkers Jane Jacobs and Richard Florida, many communities are beginning to recognize the value of investing in cultural assets and quality of place in order to attract talent, investment and stimulate innovation. The emergence of creative workers—in Florida’s language, the “creative class”—and of a place-based “creative capital” is increasingly seen as a lever for the development of competitive local economies and innovative societies. For many cities and communities, particularly those that lack comprehensive community plans, identifying and moving forward with the right mix of social, cultural, civic and technological infrastructure required to foster a creative environment remains a challenge.

As Canadian communities become increasingly diverse, culture can also play an important role in building social cohesion, a sense of community and a shared value set that is rooted in local diversity. A number of pilot projects have shown that integrating culture with the delivery of social services is a successful tool for integrating at risk groups, including youth.

The key challenges in the area of cultural sustainability reflect the very siloed approach to culture and the lack of integrated planning, even among traditional cultural disciplines of the arts, heritage and cultural industries. Even where arts and culture plans exist, there is limited integration with community development goals related to economic development, the environment, urban form strategies and social services.

The notion of cultural sustainability is not yet well defined or well understood at the community level. One approach is to view cultural sustainability as an integrated planning and decision-making process that looks toward a long-term view of a cultural system’s development. A cultural sustainability policy approach would begin by determining the indicators of healthy cultural systems in Canada, and would take into account the connections among cultural, social, economic and environmental objectives and their long-term outcomes. By contrast, past approaches to cultural policy have tended to focus on supporting the elements of the cultural production cycle: creation, production and dissemination. This perspective could be broadened to examine the role of culture in the long-term development, vibrancy and cohesion of communities.

4.2.4 Economic Sustainability

There are several facets to economic sustainability. On one level, it focuses on development, not simply growth. This implies the economic activity that is conducive to, as well as supports, sustainable community development. It also requires that the use of appropriate technologies encourages the use of renewable resources and inputs to production, actively discourages the generation of externalities arising from economic activity, such as air, water and soil pollution.

Economic sustainability strives to reduce inequity among groups in society by providing opportunities for meaningful employment to marginalized citizens. Employment should be readily accessible because an economically sustainable community has economic activity that contributes to the quality of life with compromising the natural environment. Employment opportunities could also build upon indigenous skills and knowledge. Sufficient services and supports should be in place to provide economic security in the event of disability or disease. People need economic security when unemployed, ill, disabled or otherwise unable to secure a livelihood.

Community economic development can be defined as a process through which the community itself develops the development of the community. Economic development is seen as a means to advance social, cultural and environmental objectives. The aim is to promote economic development that provides opportunities for people of different incomes and skills, promotes a better quality of life and protects the environment. A long-term perspective drives decision-making through meaningful consultations with community stakeholders.

Economic sustainability can be defined as encouraging economic growth while achieving positive social, cultural and environmental impacts. In cities and communities, economic growth is founded upon recognition of their capacity to develop their community through innovation. This is achieved through recognition of the unique attributes the community possesses that lead to economic growth, such as post-secondary and research institutions, emergent or pre-existing clusters, and highly skilled people.

In Canada's cities and communities, the twin goals of economic growth and resource efficiency need to be achieved in a way that limits negative impacts on social equity, on air, water and land quality, and does not deplete national resources available to the economy at an unacceptable rate. Achieving economic sustainability in Canadian cities and communities relies upon all levels of government working together with the private sector and other actors to address a number of key challenges.

4.3 Sustainability for Municipalities and First Nation Communities

Sustainability needs to be integrated into the process of local community development, which is about communities, families, and educated and responsible citizens. There is consensus among experts that sustainability must be achieved at the local level if it is ever to be achieved on a global basis. There is general agreement of the notion of sustainability at a conceptual level

(meeting the needs of the present without impairing the potential for future generations to do so), but transferring this to a local level becomes much less clear.

At the local level, sustainability requires that development support community life, culture and society by using the resources of local residents. It challenges municipalities and, in fact, all orders of government to distribute the benefits of development equitably, and to sustain those benefits for all people over the long term. Sustainability brings together different development processes—economic, cultural, environmental and social—into balance with each other.

In this sense, sustainability for municipalities can be defined as development that delivers basic environmental, cultural, social and economic services to all, without threatening the viability of the communities upon which these services depend. It improves the quality of life in a city, including ecological, cultural, political, institutional, social and economic components without leaving a burden on future generations.

Sustainable community development demands a community-based process directed toward achieving optimum states of human and environmental well-being without compromising the possibilities for other people, at other times and places to do the same. It is an integrated approach that includes social, environmental, cultural and spiritual well-being, as well as economic progress, in its scope of activity.

Sustainable development planning makes use of different planning methods and tools in assisting communities to:

- Factor the four dimensions of sustainability—economic, cultural, social and environmental conditions—into the design of development projects and service strategies.
- Fully engage all sectors of the community.
- Create strategies that can be sustained because they focus on underlying systemic problems rather than problem symptoms, and because they consider long-term trends and constraints.

As such, sustainability planning is a proactive and participatory process that allows the local government and its partners to engage the intellectual, physical and economic resources of residents to plan a course to the future.

4.4 What is a "Sustainable Community?"

If the goal of the ICSPs is to move closer towards a sustainable community, then a tangible definition of a "sustainable community" is required. The following are some of the characteristics that a sustainable community displays:

Manages resources within ecological limits

- Establishes open space areas and wildlife conservation zones in order to maintain a representative level of biodiversity within the community and an adequate recreation space for residents
- Promotes mixed-use development in areas where low to zero polluting transportation modes like public transit, pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths are easily accessible
- Widespread use of energy and water efficient devices, and uses native plants for landscaping
- Fleet uses clean-burning fuels like compressed natural gas, hydrogen or batteries
- A walkable environment where it is convenient and pleasant to get from place to place.
- Manages infrastructure services and maintains assets in way that protects the environment within existing fiscal restraints.
- Departments use recycled paper products, non-toxic janitorial products and durable goods

Provides the means for citizens to meet economic needs

- Maintains a supply of affordable housing that is reflective of the community's diverse income levels
- Offers a "livable wage" for municipal employees
- Purchases from local vendors, and contracts local service providers
- Ensures job training is available for those entering workforce and provides incentives for employers to locate to where pockets of high unemployment exist in the community
- Encourages environmental stewardship among businesses through regulatory incentives
- Assists in determining the long-term economic viability of various economic sectors of the community

Promotes socially just and inclusive communities

- Supports programs that increase community cohesiveness and safety
- Engages the public in land and resource use decisions
- Celebrates and cultivates respect for the diversity of the community
- Provides substantial, usable areas of public space that support and encourage informal social activity, recreation and civic gatherings
- Empowers citizens with the capacity to positively affect the outcome of decisions that affect them.

Promotes creative and vibrant communities

- Attracts and retains skilled workforce, and nurtures dynamic locales of experimentation and innovation
- Promotes meaning and a sense of belonging through distinctive heritage and cultural expression at the local level
- Celebrates and cultivates respect for diversity of the community
- Provides cultural attractions and community facilities, such as schools, libraries, daycare centres and leisure facilities

- Supports the creation of visual interest, the creation of functional public spaces, the protection and enhancement of public views, and the placement of art in publicly-accessible places

4.5 What is “Integrated” Planning?

Perhaps one of the greatest challenges of the ICSP process is to foster integration in the planning process. This means that decision-making processes should include consideration of a broad range of environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts. The division of responsibilities in local governments (transportation, housing, economic development) is usually based on traditional sectors and has little relationship to ecosystem, societal or economic sustainability. The separation of functions within a municipal organization often results in a decision-maker in one area overlooking impacts that would be readily apparent to people in other areas.

Integration involves developing organizational processes that allow such impacts to be easily viewed and considered across departments before decision-making occurs. Integration also suggests working more closely and cooperatively with other organizations, including neighboring municipalities, other levels of government and, most significantly, all partners within the local community. It is essential that respective stakeholders from different sectors of society actively participate in reaching basic a consensus on the path to take towards sustainability.

In using an integrated approach, it is key to define problems and issues in ways that recognize the inter-sectoral relationships between the factors contributing to the problem. This way, solutions are more easily crafted in ways that simultaneously address different factors, such as the underlying social and economic challenges related to housing and homelessness issues.

5. PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING AN ICSP

A sustainable community is something that cannot be created in isolation of complex environmental, economic and social connections at local, regional and global scales. The sustainable community is one that seeks to improve its own natural and cultural environment, whilst also meeting the conditions of global sustainability, particularly, in terms of the three aforementioned principles.

Planning for sustainability promotes responsible development—not anti-development. It requires a democratic process of planning to achieve the greatest common good for all segments of the population, protect the health of the environment and, assure future generations of the resources they will need to survive and progress. Based on research, literature and experience of what is most applicable to local authorities, a number of principles for integrated community sustainability planning emerge:

Comprehensive Analysis: Sustainability requires planning that considers economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts, including those that are indirect and long-term. This requires adequate information and evaluation tools that allow stakeholders and decision-makers to understand the effects of their decisions.

Integrated and Strategic planning: Sustainability planning requires that individual decisions support a community's long-term strategic objectives. For example, transportation planning decisions should be subordinate to strategic economic, social and land use plans.

Focus on Goals, Performance Indicators and Outcomes: Sustainability requires that planning be based on goals and outcomes, such as improved social welfare, ecological health and access. It does not limit analysis to financial impacts and market activities.

Consideration of Equity: Sustainability emphasizes that equity impacts should be considered in decision-making, including those that are indirect and long-term (imposed on future generations).

Market Principles: Market principles include consumer choice, full-cost pricing and economic neutrality that support sustainable outcomes.

Precautionary Principle: Sustainability supports the precautionary principle, which emphasizes the importance of incorporating risks in decision-making and favoring policies that minimize such risks when possible.

Conservation Ethic: Sustainability favors solutions that increase efficiency and reduce resource consumption, due to uncertainties about future conditions.

Transparency, Accountability and Reporting: Sustainability requires a clearly defined and transparent planning and reporting process. This permits all partners to determine respective roles and responsibilities, and clearly see progress.

Continual improvement: There is an imperative to take immediate action to become more sustainable and to make continual improvement. Change will not occur all at once; however, it is important to make continual improvements by making the most of advances in technology and scientific understanding about what is sustainable, and by making the most of increases in community awareness of sustainability issues.

Public Involvement: Recognition that sustainability cannot be achieved, nor significant progress made toward it, without the support and involvement of the whole community. Adequate opportunities for stakeholders to become informed about issues and to become involved in decision-making, and good communication between professionals and the general public. Ongoing community input and feedback required for successful implementation of sustainability plans.

Implementability: A typical failure of many planning processes is the failure to implement (in part or fully) the actions described in the plans. The vision and actions outlined in the plans must be appropriate for the community and must be implementable.

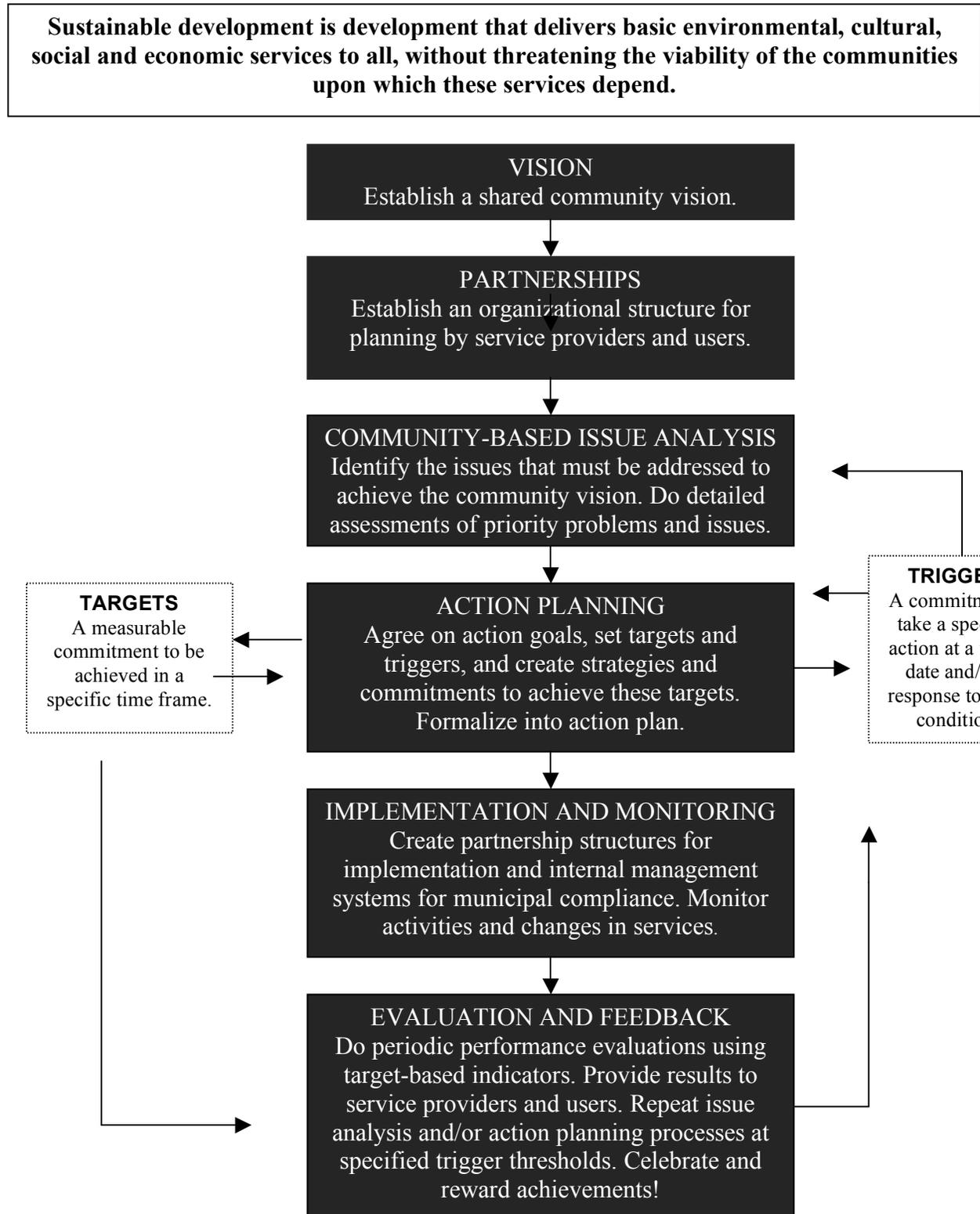
6. DEVELOPING AN ICSP

A brief examination of research literature reveals that a fairly significant amount of work has already been completed on how to develop a community sustainability plan, although mainly with respect to environmental considerations. Organisations such as the American Planning Association, the Canadian Institute of Planners, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), the United Nations (Melbourne Principles), the Natural Step and the International Centre for Sustainable Cities possess different models and processes for developing sustainability plans. However, the models do not usually include all four of the dimensions of sustainability as incorporated in the New Deal, instead focussing on its environmental and economic aspects.

There is likely no single correct way to engage in ICSP, and there are numerous planning frameworks that can be used as the basis for developing an ICSP. This framework is one of many possible approaches and is used simply to indicate one potential way to develop an ICSP. There are numerous sector-specific and multi-disciplinary approaches that could also be used as a framework to develop ICSPs.

The planning framework presented in the following pages is based on ICLEI's Local Agenda 21 Planning Guide (however, it has been modified to align more closely with the NDCC—see Figure 1 for graphic representation). The ICLEI Guide was derived from real-life planning efforts around the world, and the resulting framework is used extensively. It was prepared specifically to assist local government and their local partners to learn and undertake the challenging task of sustainable development planning.

FIGURE 1 THE ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PLANNING



6.1 Vision

A vision describes the future because it provides a description of what success would look like. A shared vision can provide a basis for agreement that will guide a community as it selects issues for analysis, and negotiates action goals and targets, and work plans.

Participants should be ready to present their thoughts of an ideal situation, including ideas that may normally be judged as unrealistic. Communicating these ideas can inspire ambition and help to clarify the fundamental values that stakeholders apply to a situation. Ultimately, the visioning process should identify key principles or values that all stakeholders and partners can agree to as fundamental to their notion of sustainability.

6.2 Partnerships

Community sustainability planning engages residents, municipal partners and stakeholders in defining and implementing action plans. Planning should be undertaken collectively among these groups and can be organised to represent the desires, values and ideals of the various partners and stakeholders within the community. There can be a wide variety in the types of stakeholders that different communities involve in their planning.

The creation of a dedicated structure (Stakeholder Group) to coordinate and oversee stakeholder involvement in the planning can be an important first step in any sustainability planning effort. The first task of this group is usually to formulate the aforementioned vision.

6.3 Issues Analysis

Involving local communities in the analysis issues is essential to the solution of problems. Municipal decisions are more likely to succeed and win public support if they respond to the needs, concerns and preferences of local citizens. Strategies can also benefit from the knowledge and resources that local residents and institutions can themselves contribute to solving problems.

Community-based issues analysis typically involves two components. First, a process is established to obtain local knowledge of local conditions. Second, technical assessments are undertaken to provide stakeholders with further information that they may not have. All of this information is then reviewed together by all partners, which they then use to try and define local problems.

Community-based issue analysis also provides other benefits. The process can usually assist a community to establish priorities for action. Limited resources and the inability to address all issues at the same time leads to the need to set priorities.

In addition, the combined use of technical and local information assists the community in establishing “baseline” data and indicators against which progress and future changes in conditions can be measured.

6.4 Developing an action plan

Once the issue have been identified and prioritized, partners can begin the process of creating action plans. The action planning process has three basic components:

1. **Goals:** action goals are the objectives the community aims to achieve in its vision. The community needs to translate the vision into specific directives. These are then used to guide organisations, experts or professional staff to develop specific programs. Thus, they provide an intermediate step between the vision statement and specific measurable targets for improvement.
2. **Targets and Triggers:** once the goals are established, municipal staff should work with partners to define specific targets to be achieved within specified time frames. Planning efforts greatly benefit from the establishment of concrete targets, because these targets permit managers to evaluate the actions being taken and the progress being made. Triggers are unique forms of targets – they are agreed-upon future conditions that trigger further action by partners when addressing a problem. For example, a community with air pollution problems may not be able to agree, at present, to establish restrictions on car use, but they could agree that when local road use reaches a certain level, they will institute a system of road pricing, such as toll collection.
3. **Action Strategies and Commitments:** an action plan must specify the action strategies and commitments of different partners in order for them to work effectively. Action strategies and commitments should be very precise and contain specific projects, time schedules for implementation and a commitment to allocate time, money and human resources.

6.5 Implementation and Monitoring

The implementation of partnership-based action plans requires some changes in typical operating procedures. Divisions of responsibility, contractual arrangements and other practices may need to be adjusted to allow for active participation by all partners. In addition, while the municipal administration institutes internal changes, external partnerships and/or arrangements must be formalized. Agreements that outline the specific responsibilities fro each partner are required. These should be specific and include schedules and methods to monitor work. Sometimes, a new organisation or institution may be required to coordinate the implementation of an action plan.

Monitoring should begin during the implementation phase, not afterward. Accurate documentation of implementation activities and their impacts should be kept regularly. This will permit the evaluation of the strategies and their impacts on local conditions. This documentation is extremely valuable, and at times necessary, to identify the causes of problems that may arise during the implementation of action strategies.

6.6 Evaluation and feedback

Monitoring is useful for internal management purposes, and evaluation and feedback are used for both internal and external purposes. Evaluation and feedback are also used to inform the general public about progress. These mechanisms are necessary to maintain accountability among the various partners involved in implementing an action plan.

An effective evaluation and feedback system provides regular information about important changes in local conditions and progress towards targets. Evaluation information can be used to guide planning and resource allocation processes so that these processes are kept accountable to the vision and its objectives.

7. CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING ICSPS

How can sustainable development be made meaningful at the local level? How can we develop systems to involve stakeholders in devising appropriate solutions to local development issues? How can the quality of municipal services be improved and integrated to address the environmental, social, cultural and economic prospect of communities? These are some of the issues that this document has attempted to address. However, the solutions are not as simple as following the process identified here and developing a community plan. There are a number of significant challenges that communities will face in trying to develop ICSPs. Identifying these challenges and proposing solutions will assist Canadian communities in overcoming these challenges quickly and effectively.

7.1 Securing Broad Top-Level Support

Successful sustainability initiatives rely on the support of key political people and the right kind of leadership. The commitment to achieve a sustainability initiative by upper-level management and politicians increases the likelihood that it will be implemented in a timely fashion with resources and staff assigned to the tasks. Ideally, the municipal administrators or elected body should initiate a local government's sustainability process. The appropriate governing body should draft or support a city council resolution authorizing a sustainability planning effort by mandating the involvement of all city departments in the effort, and allocating the resources to do the work.

If the elected body and/or top management are not yet strong advocates of a sustainability initiative, then efforts should be made to secure their support. Strategies for establishing top-level support might include educating elected officials about sustainability or demonstrating their constituents' interest in sustainable development.

7.2 Creating Effective Local Mechanisms

A plan is only as good as the structure put in place to implement it. In most communities, the existing governance structures that are used to manage local development and provide services cannot effectively meet present-day challenges and needs (e.g., issues may overlap existing political boundaries). Local governance structures may also be organised according to

professional disciplines whereas integrated sustainability planning requires interdisciplinary and holistic approaches to problem solving.

7.3 Size of Communities and Planning Requirement

It is fairly evident that developing an ICSP for a large urban centre will require much more work and time than for a small rural community of a few hundred inhabitants. There are likely more issues to consider in big cities and greater numbers of partners will be involved. Conversely, smaller communities may not have the resources or capacity to undertake such initiatives. The principles and processes for ICSPs should be flexible enough to accommodate differences.

7.4 Political Change and Instability

One of the key elements of an ICSP is the use of a long-term planning horizon. Community sustainability is based on individual actions and strategies within a comprehensive long-term framework. Unfortunately, elected officials usually serve for short terms and often may not have the motivation to see beyond their relatively short tenure.

7.5 Lack of Information and Research

Municipalities usually lack the basic information that they require to make decisions. Although Statistics Canada is recognized as one of the top statistical agencies in the world, municipal data is the responsibility of the provinces/territories, and national information is not readily available. Over the past three years, the Government of Canada has worked diligently to improve the availability of information on the 27 CMAs and has produced a number of reports. Moving forward, significant effort will be required by all partners to improve local data sources.

First Nations communities also have a limited baseline data necessary to make informed and sustainable decisions. The Government of Canada is responsible for gathering and providing basic information to First Nation communities. Over the past five years, DIAND, along with other applicable government departments (e.g.: Environment Canada's mapping of "species at risk") have been working to improve the availability of information between government departments and within First Nation communities. Although a lot of headway has been made, significant cooperation and collaboration between federal government departments, First Nations and contiguous municipalities is still required to fill information gaps and update existing resources.

7.6 Effective Public Participation and Implementation Issues

Advancing towards sustainability requires participation from all sectors of the community because the goals of sustainability are ambitious. This makes public participation crucial to ensuring that the entire community understands the links between personal lifestyle habits and improving quality of life within a community, and acts accordingly.

Involving the public throughout an ICSP process will also build the necessary degree of trust and consensus for its implementation. To secure participation that is truly representative of the community, it is important to reach out to its diverse members.

Appropriate participatory mechanisms will be required as communities have become more culturally and racially diverse, and traditional consultative mechanisms have become less effective in reaching out to members of the public. Assessing the community's cultural profile and civic traditions can suggest different strategies regarding citizen participation. For example, some meetings may require translators and they may be appropriately held in cultural centers.

In addition, public documents should be crafted in layperson's terms so that they are accessible to a wider group than experts, and to enable citizens to partake in dialogues as informed participants. Some effective approaches to soliciting public feedback include holding community meetings and focus groups, and conducting surveys. The Internet is also a good venue to post documents and solicit public feedback.

7.7 Intergovernmental and Regional Coordination and Collaboration

The development and implementation of ICSPs will require greater and deeper coordination among governments: all orders of governance will be motivated to demonstrate increased flexibility to respond to place-based situations; municipalities may need to consider implementing a systems approach to planning and managing community development; new decision-making processes involving new cross-departmental and inter-municipal/FN (or regional/metropolitan) management structures may be required.