

Buildings, Infrastructure & Open Space Strategies Workshop Report

Workshop held February 24, 2010
as part of *myPG: Prince George's community
sustainability plan*

*This report contains the raw output of the
workshop, edited slightly for clarity.*

Introduction:

Purpose and Process

This workshop drew together people from across the spectrum of individuals and groups interested in the workshop topic.

The purpose was to develop “big move” strategies to achieve the community's vision as expressed in the Envisioning phase of myPG.

Process:

- Review and comment on preliminary community goals
- Identify barriers to achieving the goals in relation to the workshop topic
- Within specific sectors such as buildings, solid waste, etc., develop strategies to overcome these barriers. Proposed strategies either enhance or add to existing strategies.
- Identify linkages between different sectors, and develop broad strategies that cut across the sectors.

Key Points

The most closely related goals for the community were to reduce waste and recycle, protect and preserve habitat and water, address air quality issues, provide accessible and affordable housing while increasing energy efficiency and self sufficiency, and to budget needs carefully.

Helpful information:

- Prince George maintains excellent drinking water quality, but uses large quantities.
- Citizens are very interested in increasing recycling, to improve on the 21% solid waste diversion rate.
- The public has significant influence over the health of local streams and ecosystems through ownership of parks, other open spaces, and the community forest, and through influence over development practices.
- Older buildings dominate energy use and GHG emissions from the buildings sector in Prince George.

Goals and Barriers Discussion

Most Relevant Goals

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| • air quality, climate | • flood protection | local food | budgeting |
| • protect natural habitat | • reduce waste | • accessible, affordable services | • strong identity, community pride |
| • protect, preserve water | landfilling | • safety & security | |
| • energy efficiency | • accessible, affordable housing | • sustainable business | |
| • renewable energy | • healthy recreation, | • reduced taxes, careful | |

Community goals for the future of Prince George will lead development and prioritization of sustainability actions. The following summarizes workshop participants' review of preliminary community goals coming out of the Envisioning Phase of myPG.

VISION: Thoughts about citizen goals

- Interesting to see emphasis on green energy sources & recycling
- It's good to see people wanting to protect environment
- "Waste" "recycling" now called resource management, relate to economic development
- Recycling takes focus, but reducing and reuse are important too
- Ideal "apple pie" goals – general tone of involvement is driven by dissatisfaction
- **Power of community. How we design our community determines how we connect to each other**
- **Food security is a huge component of sustainability**
- Very broad, could apply to any community anywhere. Be more specific to PG.
- What do we mean when we say attractive?
- How do we make the goals more tangible?
- Influencing long-term growth is the critical factor
- People are supportive of the vision, but not sure if they want to be engaged in it - How do we get people involved in the actions needed to meet these goals?
- Overcoming divide between local developers and City to develop common interests is key
- Challenge - we have to stay financially healthy as well

Proposed strategies
and actions for fulfilling
community sustainability
goals

Overall Environment



Most Relevant Goals

- air quality, climate
- protect natural habitat
- protect, preserve water
- energy efficiency
- renewable energy
- flood protection
- reduce waste landfilling
- accessible, affordable housing
- healthy recreation, local food
- accessible, affordable services
- safety & security
- sustainable business
- reduced taxes, careful budgeting
- strong identity, community pride

“Broad themes” that focused on overcoming barriers to reaching the above goals

Proposed Strategies & Actions

Spatial Themes

- Cluster development (downtown, neighbourhood centres)
- Co-locate buildings, infrastructure, and open space - e.g. a park used for stormwater management adjacent to buildings
- Re-allocate space to highest priority uses
- Consider transitional uses
- Re-use or adapt existing buildings & spaces
- Acquire key sites now, anticipating later needs
- Protect valued open space such as agricultural land and habitat

Communications & Education Theme

- **Strong communications & education of adults to support technical, professional expertise & understanding**
- Emphasize sustainability education with children to build cultural change over time
- Make our resource usage transparent, e.g. put ‘smart’ meters in homes
- Development of ‘beacon’ projects which are do-able, measurable objectives that can be reported to the public

Partnerships & Engagement Theme

- **Build strong partnerships**
- Link complementary users at one site, e.g. community sustainability centre with Farmer’s Market
- Coordinate the delivery and timing of different programs
- Balance community consultation with the need for action

Costs & Regulations Theme

- Recognize the non-market values of open space
- Aim incentives at people who need it most, e.g. affordability
- Keep moving on bylaws
- Address up-front costs of going green, e.g. through incentives
- Provide a balance of incentives and regulations
- Conventional incentives (tax exemptions, etc) to balance the market, mixed with innovative incentives (e.g. lower Development Cost Charges in specific areas, Public Private Partnerships with city, developers and lending institutions to facilitate long-term investment)

Development Themes

- Find valuable users for current ‘wastes’
- Use local resources appropriately, e.g. “wood first” in construction
- Assess existing programs with sustainability criteria
- **PRIORITIZE using sustainability criteria**
- Develop alternative forms of energy in PG as demonstration/pilot retrofit projects to prove their viability in the north

Infrastructure

Most Relevant Goals

- reduce carbon emissions & fossil fuel dependence
- reduce waste landfilling
- protect and preserve water
- protect natural habitat
- sustainable economy
- carefully budget needs
- flood protection
- strong identity, community pride



Proposed Strategies & Actions

Funding and Resource Availability

- There is a clear need for long term, sustainable funding of infrastructure.
- We may need to re-think how services are paid for - for example through user-pay services.

Communication and Public Awareness

- Clearly communicating service and program (e.g. garbage collection) levels, costs of these, and optional service items to the public would help address knowledge gaps, and help the public in contributing to decisions regarding public services.
- Enhanced education and outreach programs will support more sustainable management of resources, such as water conservation.
- Collaboration with governments, agencies, NGO's and private sector/business is critical to building support for sustainability.

Behaviour Change

- The most significant change will come from the next generation - school outreach programs will support this.
- There are cost implications if we don't change the way resources and infrastructure is used.

Incentives and Regulations

- Schools could develop curriculum programs, e.g. on waste reduction, and receive breaks on fees as an incentive.
- Coordination of the the many different incentive programs available would support more take up of these programs.

Agency Leadership

- Different agencies such as municipal facilities, UNBC, or the hotel industry can stimulate interest and change through demonstration projects (e.g. addressing water conservation or waste reduction).
- Friendly competitions could also contribute, for example UNBC vs. School District.
- Results of demonstrations or competitions must be communicated to target audiences.
- A Demand Management audit position at City could coordinate and drive many efforts - e.g. water and waste reduction.
- Stronger sustainable municipal purchasing policies for the City, and communicating/ sharing those, could also provide leadership.

Program and Service Integration

- Inter-jurisdictional co-ordination and knowledge sharing will strengthen the City's programs.

Waste Reduction

- Product stewardship is an important part of waste reduction.
- The City and RD should commit to long-term waste reduction goals.
- Increasing connections between the City, Regional District, business is essential to waste reduction results.

Adaptable & Resilient Infrastructure

- Infrastructure must become adaptable to different energy sources, technologies, and climate change.
- Alternative infrastructure design should be explored; this could include Subdivision standards + renewal practices; e.g. locating utility corridors off-road.

Open Space

Most Relevant Goals

- improved air quality
- reduced carbon emissions
- self-sufficient with renewable energy
- protected habitat
- protect water from pollution
- reduce waste production
- safety & security
- healthy recreation, local food
- all services accessible, affordable
- strong identity, community pride
- reduced taxes, careful budgeting



Proposed Strategies & Actions

Re-use sites for new priorities

- “Readaptive” uses for vacant and under-utilized sites (e.g. schools for community centres and gardens)
- Rezoning community parks and school plots
- Trading of assets

Realize Untapped Development Opportunities

- Another use for golf and curling club land – still green
- Support a motorized park
- PG snowmobile club has trails for motorized recreation – connection to city

Support Agriculture in the Region and the City

- Develop Agricultural Area Plan within region
- Convert closed school grounds to municipal agricultural reserve system
- Use an integrative approach
- Prioritize green space, local food
- Form food policy council as advisor to council(s) (city & region) - Quick Win

Balance of Regulations and Incentives

- Dedicate money to enforce bylaws
- Strong bylaws that represent the needs of the community
- Develop pesticide bylaws
- Reduce the disconnect, remind all that bylaws are community decisions
- No passing the buck re: bylaws e.g. ATV &

snowmobiles - Quick Win

- To promote local agriculture, public access, encourage tax rebates for private land owners to release these lands for public use (trail access/routes/greenspace)
- Private incentives lower taxes
- Recognize people that have naturalized their property (awards)

Encourage Naturalization

- Natural areas management strategy
- Natural areas & urban forest management plan and funding for implementation
- Encourage less lawns, more perennial shrubs and trees
- Increase biodiversity with integrated land use and vision
- Recognizing endangered species and critical habitat
- Identification and preservation of special wildlands
- Understand and support forest ecosystem networks

Expand Communication and Education

- Master plan, other access or better access
- City website upgraded - Quick Win
- Include local producer on site web ex. Heal Program
- Brochures & webpage development for education
- Educate – healthy food, watershed (ie. Storm drains), community forest

Partnerships and Engagement

- Develop partnerships, government & industry
- Industrial stakeholder partnerships in land use strategies

- Youth & Sr. engagement and informal recreation provision
- Real & true partnerships between agencies, community groups, private owners, to align better ICSP action
- Develop greening/stewardship programs in schools

Update Plans

- Communication plan
- Update both trails and parks plans re. motorized
- Parks operational review and public inputs
- Beautification plans
- Address cumulative effects of small projects in enviro regulations

Celebrating Culture and Identity

- Promote winter city identity
- Incorporate social scene
- Celebration of natural environment in site design and planning to reflect the importance of our natural environment ie. Native plant species, materials, architecture, celebrating viewscape

Prioritize and Implement

- Develop a prioritization tool
- % of City budget devoted to environment “put your money where your mouth is”
- Prioritize control of “weeds” (e.g. thistles over dandelions)
- Master Plans for implementation and funding assistance

Buildings & Energy

Most Relevant Goals

- improve air quality
- reduce carbon emissions and fossil fuels
- protect and preserve water
- energy efficiency
- self-sufficiency through renewable energy
- accessible, affordable safe housing
- health & wellness
- safety & security
- fiscally responsible
- sustainable economy

Proposed Strategies & Actions

Build a Community Sustainability Centre (A One Stop Shop!!)

This centre could include:

- Staffing (part time/full time)
- Educational material and tools
- Networking and liaison functions
- Displays of success stories
- Could involve an association or society

Locally developed online tool

- Provide information and choices for consumers, business owners regarding building
- Provide decision making support
- Appeal to the younger segment of the population through digital media

Incentive and/or Regulations

- Transit free ride programs - e.g. free rides on poor air quality days
- Tools for building inspectors to assess efficiency - included in standard home inspections
- Link receiving mortgage approvals with building energy efficiency
- Incentives should be tied into targets for reducing energy use and consumption

Addressing Up Front Costs

- Increase costs for certain behaviors or actions (e.g. increases in pay parking, gas taxes, etc)
- Reward positive behaviours (e.g. free public transportation)
- City allocate budget to “community sustainability” (i.e. gas tax money) including accountability of ways money is being spent
- Financial institutions could provide mortgage interest rate incentives for reducing energy use, monthly payment options, etc.
- Foster development of a community foundation that citizens can invest into for green strategies/development

Education and Knowledge Aquisition

- Ramp up education programs at local institutions (CNC, UNBC) that relate to “green” subject matter (training in green trades, environmental planning, green economics, etc.)
- Incorporate innovative products and strategies into home shows – promote green homes and infrastructure

Physical Geography

- Attempt to develop industry outside of the bowl area
- Densification within the bowl area will occur if air quality can be improved - make the bowl a more attractive place to live
- Provide housing for students downtown, e.g. short-term rentals - students prefer an urban environment and lower cost housing, and it supports a stronger downtown

Demonstration Projects

- Develop alternative forms of energy in PG as demonstration/pilot retrofit projects to prove their viability in the north
- Provide professionally developed information packages on specific benefits identified in pilot projects