

Land Use & Transportation Strategies

Workshop Report

Workshop held February 23, 2010
as part of myPG: Prince George's community sustainability plan

This report contains the raw output of the workshop, edited 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
- Develop strategies to overcome these barriers. Proposed strategies either enhance or add to existing strategies.

Key Points

The most closely related goals for the community were to have a great downtown, to address air quality, improve health, and to budget needs carefully.

The group began by discussing barriers and strategies for this overall vision, before discussing specifics for land use and transportation.

Helpful information:

- Over 30 years, growth of about 7,000 people is expected for PG.
- Currently, there is capacity to meet housing and commercial needs for 30 years through infill and redevelopment in areas already developed.
- Direct and indirectly, traffic accidents cost each PG resident \$1,400/year, about 25% higher than the BC average.
- CAA estimates the average cost of owning a car at \$10,000/year.

Goals and Barriers Discussion

Most Relevant Goals

- improved air quality
- reduced carbon emissions
- protected habitat
- accessible, affordable, safe housing
- healthy community, good recreation, local food
- safe, secure community
- friendly, supportive community, strong culture
- a clear identity - great downtown
- a diverse, healthy economy with good shopping
- international connections
- careful budgeting

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: Comments on the preliminary vision

- "Well designed" development - compounding factors - historical structure of cities (eg. soccer fields and transportation)
- Growth - maybe 'change' is a better term
- Community built for the young, but we're aging - should 'build' for the aging population - well-designed for the older folks
- "improve"? should focus on walkability - prioritize it and other alternative modes over vehicles

Barriers to achieving the vision

Market oriented to greenfield development

- May lack buyers for development downtown
- May lack development industry support
- Developers are mostly oriented to SF, greenfield sites
- Prior commitments are politically hard to change
- Some developers are complacent about a real market shift towards multi-family

Buildings and infrastructure do not support goals well yet

- Right now, there is no congestion to make sprawl less attractive
- Housing is not accessible (stairs) for aging populations
- Infrastructure (transit) may not be a viable alternative to private transportation without densification
- Infrastructure may need to be strengthened to adapt to local impacts of climate change

Environment is a disincentive to redevelopment

- Air quality in the bowl a disincentive to live there

Real estate economics support greenfield and auto-oriented development

- Few multi-family units for purchase (most are new rental)
- Multi-family development may not be profitable
- Land economics make single-family development more profitable
- Lack of population growth (due to many factors)
- Land more affordable on periphery (more expensive to do

infill)

- Traditional financing / lending practices promote what has been done before in a given market (i.e. easier to finance SF greenfield than infill or mixed use)
- There is already investment in planned areas and projects are in the pipeline
- Planning has already been done for greenfields

Culture (Perceptions) support small scale, low-density, distributed land use

- Culture/perception of PG as a northern community - not a "big" city
- Perception that it is hard to access urban services & nature at the same time
- People like their own private open space
- Perception that congestion is always bad

Aesthetics/Amenities discourage downtown redevelopment

- Noise pollution
- Downtown appears dirty, uninviting (aesthetics)
- Downtown lacks amenity draws
- Homelessness & social problems downtown (e.g. nuisance behaviours)

Proposed strategies
and actions for fulfilling
community sustainability
goals

Land Use & Transportation Overall

Most Relevant Goals

- improved air quality
- reduced carbon emissions
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Proposed Strategy: **Recognize market and business realities in the land use/transportation strategy, so that it works for neighbourhoods, developers, the City, and the environment.**

Use examples/pilots and partnerships to spark new approaches to development

- Add quality and variety in housing forms through examples/pilot projects
- Public/private partnerships to spark projects

Prioritize infrastructure investments to focus on areas most supportive of the vision

- Prioritize / implement “smart” plans. Develop cross jurisdictional support for the plans
- Plan for future demographics
- Adopt a nodal development pattern for infrastructure savings
- Focus on transportation demand management strategies
- Use spaces for many purposes (cross utilization) & adapt current buildings for new uses

Focus on environmental goals in transportation and land use decisions

- Support good open space connections
- Increase alternative transportation (safe, convenient, attractive)
- Decrease climate impacts through housing upgrades and new, efficient construction
- Move industry from the downtown airshed if possible
- Increase industrial accountability - require public reporting of air, water emissions and resulting impacts on the environment
- Increase the urban forest and manage it through the community
- Increase road maintenance & dust control

Adopt a realistic, balanced approach to re-orient the market to support the vision

- Regulations, incentives and other tools encourage vision through a balance of carrots and sticks
- Open the City’s doors, decrease disincentives to infill development
- Review City’s business processes to streamline them
- Align rural resource and ALR designations to boost agriculture and clarify lands for production vs. development
- Use incentives and strategies to catalyze a shift to nodal development. Incorporate complementary incentives for green buildings

- Use public investment to lead change downtown - reducing developer/financing risk
- Protect development from hazardous conditions
- Protect the environment from inappropriate development

Help the culture evolve through communication and dialogue

- Use research, education and marketing to shift attitudes - share data to support this shift
- Dialogue with/between developers/regulators/buyers to align perceptions with market/cultural reality
- Increase “pride of place”/ community spirit

Enhance desired growth areas to attract development and activity

- Make downtown amenities more accessible to residents outside downtown
- At the street level, integrate social services
- Support safe, clean spaces
- Add green spaces, connections, walkability (e.g. greenway connections)
- Focus on aesthetic improvement in public and private areas (e.g. wood first)

Land Use

Most Relevant Goals

- protected habitat
- accessible, affordable, safe housing
- healthy community, good recreation, local food
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- a clear identity
- a diverse, healthy economy with good shopping

Proposed Strategy: **Focus most growth downtown and near existing commercial centres**

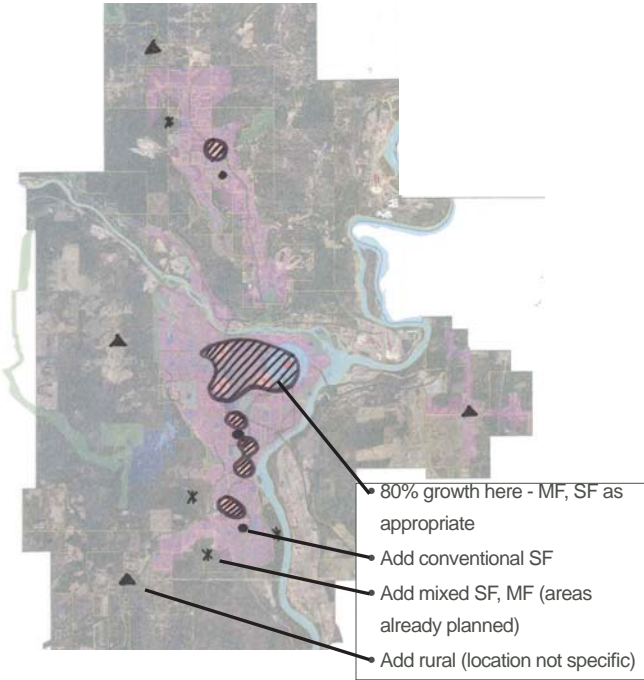
Workshop Process

We began by developing general agreement that PG should become more compact in order to support downtown revitalization and existing neighbourhood investment, and should define more closely where growth should go:

- Select housing forms/types and locate them in the appropriate areas to accommodate anticipated growth: 5500 development units in 30 years
- Split the growth amongst the various housing forms/types as a % (e.g. 75% single family, 25% multi-family)
- Justify the results based on current and future social, economic and environmental conditions & known barriers to compact growth

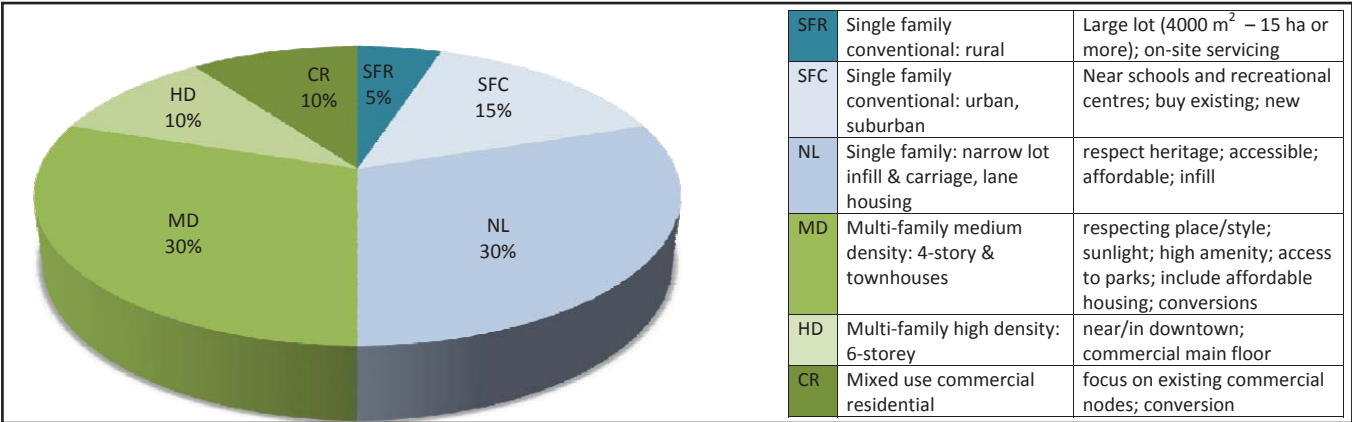
Results *(concept map illustrates the growth priorities and is not intended to be specific)*

- Focus most growth in/near downtown and within easy walking distance of existing commercial centres
- Recognize existing plans and investments by allocating some growth to those areas. This growth is anticipated to happen earlier, with later growth more focused to existing centres and downtown
- Over 30 years, the total split in housing types is shown below:



Implications/Rationale

- Growth is limited: existing zoned and planned capacity dramatically exceeds realistic demand
- Growth needs to focus on existing nodes (commercial) & infill if it is to support a strong downtown and neighbourhood centres; in contrast, existing economic conditions support conventional suburbs
- The cost of conversion or redevelopment is an issue for some sites
- The life span of existing homes is short, so we will see 'hollowing out' homes until higher land values support renovation and redevelopment
- Growth allocation needs to consider walkability, hazards (floodplain), public amenities (parks, facilities, utility services and schools, and environmental protection and enhancement
- Housing needs to respond to changing demographics (aging)
- Need to provide safe, affordable housing
- Existing housing stock needs significant maintenance/conversion or redevelopment focus due to age and condition
- Older homes may be an important redevelopment opportunity
- Need to honour existing neighbourhood character - ensure development improves the look/feel of neighbourhoods



Transportation

Most Relevant Goals

- improved air quality
- reduced carbon emissions
- protected habitat
- healthy community
- accessible, affordable services
- safety & security
- a diverse, healthy economy
- international connectivity
- careful budgeting
- community identity



Proposed Strategy: **Prioritize limited resources to serve key areas and users needing accessibility; Collaborate to improve service delivery while minimizing costs; Implement quickly where possible.**

Strategies & Actions

Collaborate to use resources more efficiently

- formal collaboration between City, BC Transit, and the School District
- Provincial, Federal governments collaborate on funding
- work with community groups directly
- work with businesses, e.g. employer transit pass programs

Prioritize investments strongly

- link land use and transportation policy direction
- base policy on strong market research, e.g. surveys to identify real mode share potential
- prioritize investments, e.g. in key corridors where higher density matches higher transit/cycling/walking services
- shift budgets to prioritize investment in walking, cycling, transit over new investment in vehicle-focused infrastructure - implement forthcoming Active Transportation Plan "with vigour"
- transit to meet needs of the core before expanding in fringe areas
- reallocate road space to cyclists
- increase availability to workplaces in the bowl
- fund/budget based on the priorities

Increase alternative transportation by leveling the playing field vs. driving

- create a transit network with frequent, direct, reliable service on key corridors
- simplify transit - integrated bus pass; "smartcard" system

Improve road maintenance-related dust

- enforce dirt/dust production better
- collaborate between agencies on enforcement

Increase community pride, and enhance green connections

- make good use of parks, riverfront, and green spaces for transportation

Share information and educate

- support groups that are engaging the public, e.g. Cycling Club, NTIC, and recreation groups
- highlight spin-off benefits of active transportation, e.g. closer connections to the environment
- consider incentives to raise interest in alternative transportation

Ensure accessibility

- introduce snow clearing for walkways
- prioritize access for all ages, abilities
- ensure that all areas of downtown have Handy Dart access

Lead by example

- City and key business to lead transit use, e.g. Pro-Pass program

Rationale

Why the group chose this strategy:

- not much population growth
- not much development and associated amenity improvements
- little funding for improvements so most efforts on planning with little implementation
- stretched thin - an extensive existing network, plus many planned investments, but few resources
- poor current understanding of what is going on
- winter conditions make alternative transportation less attractive