

Technical Review Workshop Report

Workshop held March 16, 2010 as part of myPG: Prince George's community sustainability plan

This report contains the raw output of the workshop, edited for clarity. Participants broke into groups, so the notes vary in content and detail, depending on how each group discussed and documented each exercise.

Introduction:

Purpose

The Technical Review workshop followed four strategy workshops, which were focused on different topics: Land Use and Transportation; Building, Infrastructure and Open Space; Economic Development; and Social Development. In those workshops, participants brainstormed specific actions that would help Prince George reach the sustainability goals indicated by the community in the Envisioning Phase.

The goal of the Technical Review workshop was to resolve key questions that arose from internal analysis of the strategy workshop and Envisioning Phase results.

Key Questions

- What criteria should we use to prioritize among performance goals?
- What indicators are best to measure performance for the top goals?
- How should we strengthen draft strategies to address the potential for moderate growth?
- How should we strengthen strategies to encourage growth that contributes to priority goals?
- What early actions could we focus on?

Criteria for Prioritizing Performance Goals

Key Question: “How do we prioritize the goals in order to make best use of our resources and time?”

In groups, participants reviewed performance goals that the community responses suggested were of medium importance (measured as the number of community responses in the Envisioning phase related to the goal). An exercise to explore criteria for prioritization, they were asked to choose two priority goals and explain why they chose them. The result of this exercise was a possible list of criteria to be used to prioritize among the goals. Participants noted that the criteria developed from the exercise may or may not be applicable to prioritization among all the goals, rather than among only the medium importance goals.

Possible Prioritization Criteria

A priority goal for the sustainability plan should:

- Be a keystone goal – achieving it leads to achievement of other goals (e.g. Adequate *housing* can lead to *safety & security*; *economic diversity* can lead to *cultural richness*)
- Be a stabilizing force for the community – i.e. achieving it has a buffering effect (e.g. Economic diversification can stabilize boom-bust cycles)
- Contribute to growth and/or retention of residents and businesses (e.g. Improving air quality makes PG more attractive)
- Be a priority in any growth scenario (e.g. encouraging growth would not be a priority if we were in the midst of high growth, but housing and economic diversification would be a priority in any growth scenario)

- Be a key driver of community well-being – (e.g. Affordability, meeting basic needs are a foundation of well-being)
- Be important for the long-term (e.g. preparing for and responding to climate change, which is not important immediately but is important in the long run)
- Be overarching or all-encompassing (i.e. it has impacts on many other goals and on many areas of action)
- Encourage local inter-dependence (e.g. Economic diversification can reduce dependence on global forces)
- Be action oriented
- Be equitable
- Be measurable

Indicators for Priority Performance Goals

Key Question: “How do we measure success?”

Participants were asked to review suggested indicators for the top performance goals, to comment on them and make suggestions for additional indicators. Based on this discussion, the list of indicators for the top performance goals is shown below. As part of the discussion, the group made some general observations:

- The audience may range from public to technical; these indicators need to serve the range of audiences.
- Indicators may measure anything from actions to broad outcomes; these indicators are outcome indicators, and are not at a detailed level more suitable for monitoring individual programs or policies. A range of indicators is eventually anticipated to cover this range of monitoring.
- Indicators can act to motivate our partners and individuals in the community to act.
- Linking performance and perception indicators may be important, e.g. used in a sequence to assess the impact of action on performance and on perceptions. This would help better design and assess programs and communications.

The indicators proposed for consideration were:

Sense of Place

- Downtown vacancy rates: measure people/pedestrians, businesses in general, and services specifically
 - Rationale: PG needs a “Robson street”, results may act as a driver of further success.
- Perception of identity: measure perceptions of disconnects between groups in the community, and of a clear identity of place through surveys, polls.
- Resident participation in celebrations: Canada Day celebrations, ICEMAN, Olympic torch run, others. Find out where public participation lies, and use it as an indicator the channel funding and/or advertising.

Air Quality

- Particulate matter and TRS (odour) are already being measured and are good indicators
- Quality of Life survey measures perception already
- Aggregating is desirable as it is key to public communication
- Indicators must be aligned with what info/data we have access

Health and Wellness

The most important indicators cover both individual and societal performance, are wide-scale, and have ready data to support their measurement. Possible indicators, which cover from outcomes to details, are:

- Injury rate
- # of people frequenting farmers market
- # of vendors in farmers market
- # of licensed food producers
- # of community gardens
- Retail food environment index (a measure of how accessible residents are to food stores)
- Accessibility of health info in community @ low reading level
- Level of knowledge of health services available
- % of activities w/ sliding scale
- # of people using recreation facilities & outdoor opportunities – child obesity
- Self-rated health
- Suicide attempts
- Intake to mental health facilities
- # of programs offered
- # of facilities with a safety policy
- Amount of screen time
- # of PG schools registered as healthy & active schools
- # of public buildings providing healthy food

Equity and Inclusion

- Diversity: Improved relationships with Aboriginal communities (some participants noted the importance of other ethnic minorities as well)
- Diversity: Diverse participation in leadership roles in the community (e.g. at the City: City Council, Council committees)
- Inclusion: Improved relationships with marginalized members of the community

Economic Prosperity

- Net Business Growth: (1) by sector; (2) by neighbourhood
 - Measured by increase in business licences minus decrease in business licences
 - Measures new business and/or retention of old
 - Shows what sectors / neighbourhoods are prospering
 - Shows character of business in area
 - Benchmark against ourselves and other municipalities in time
 - Valid / Measurable / Simple

Rationale for this indicator:

- 'Backwards compatible' to an extent
- Reductive or expansive based on circumstances

- A tool for potential investors → can also help set strategic priorities for local/regional/provincial economic development
- City can affect its outcome by streamlining processes
- GDP recognized – redefined in local, meaningful terms
- Easily mapped to existing indicators

Safety and Security

The root issue is not clear in this goal so it is not possible to narrow in on one or even two indicators. Instead, what is proposed is a process of sequencing key indicators with the goal of narrowing in on fundamental indicators in the future. There must be a mechanism to review and refine indicators over time.

1. Gather the facts – performance indicators
 - Crime and re-offence rates
 - Location of crimes
 - Bullying reports in schools and overview of institutional processes in place for dealing with this issue
 - Survey of victim experience (to get at unreported crimes, needs to include what people define as crime but needs to also include bullying)
2. Understand perceptions
 - Survey on perception of crime (what is crime, what is the root cause, is there a connection between crime, housing, labour)

- Survey on downtown safety (experiences of crime, expectations, fears)
 - Survey to understand children's perception of safety in school, public spaces (a positive angle to this is also to ask where they feel safe)
3. Share information
 - After having completed the survey of perceptions, present participants with facts that have been gathered.
 4. Reassess perceptions
 - Based on those factoids, ask participants to reassess as necessary their perceptions. This final piece will help narrow in on the root issue of the goal and identify better/improved indicators.

To maintain motivation through this process and try to keep the focus from being negative at the beginning it will be important to be transparent that this is a process. It will also be important to ensure a diversity of voices in the survey including offenders as well.

Three central focus areas for this process should be identified uniquely:

1. Children and Youth
2. Downtown
3. Across Prince George

Indicators added to list provided for discussion:

- Survey of victim experience (mentioned above)
- Location of crimes (mentioned above)
- Children's participation in organized activities
- Motivation

Environmental Health

- Ratio indicator: development/population growth in (1) hazard areas, (2) environmentally sensitive areas – tied to development. (requires inventory/classification of riparian/aquatic/terrestrial systems)
- Area/type/quality indicator: green infrastructure in the urban environment. Ties to impermeable surface area, drainage, ties to personal action (and existing programs, like communities in bloom)
- Perception/social indicator: people's perception of the ecosystem health (air, water, soil) – education tool, ties to individual effort, can be tied to investments and resource needs

Economic Diversification

- Indexing PG profiles by employment figures as categorized by North American Industrial Classification system (NAICS)
 - The Simpson diversity index based on the NAICS. A diversity rating system where we understand the sectors to get there

- Go beyond 2 digits in the NAICS as it will provide more useful, detailed information
- Currently too much aggregation therefore we can draw out the more diverse emerging companies to be able to disseminate it at the community level but be able to do the technical “dig-deeper” analysis
- Outcome: recognizing local food, services & knowledge-based sectors
- Sources of income
 - Criteria – identifies all sources of income, not targeting a certain source of income

Housing

- Accessible – Total number of accessible or visitable units
- Affordable – Average price of different housing types (including rentals, single family, multiple family, seniors, etc.); % of income people are dedicating to the cost of housing
- Safe Housing – Total number of people in shelters; Total number of homeless people in the community

High and Moderate Growth Scenarios

Key Questions: “How do we strengthen our strategies in case of moderate growth?” and “How should we strengthen strategies to encourage growth that contributes to priority goals?”

An internal review of strategy workshop outputs revealed that a number of key strategies would be significantly affected by the level of growth Prince George would experience. In groups participants were asked to:

- (a) strengthen strategies to encourage growth; and
- (b) strengthen strategies that appear to rely on growth, so that they would work better with moderate growth.

Encouraging Growth

Missing strategies

- Creating and enhancing areas for attracting business
 - Industry targeting
 - Land use changes
- “What can we do for you” to attract new business
 - Zoning, create zones for specific business
 - Be selective on type of business
 - Recognizing prohibitors to growth
 - False perception, educating
- “PG First” program
 - Tailored for local businesses
 - Define our attributes, “What is good about Prince George?”
- Marketing

- Having a flexible vision so that there is no lag time in government approvals
- Migration strategies to attract new workers
- “Get 25% of your life back”, branding the ‘healthy’, rural lifestyle as an asset

Local strategies

- Enhance community attractiveness
 - Improve cultural opportunities
 - Density downtown through incentives (P3’s)
 - Local government should encourage development, not take on risk as developer
 - Retrofit existing housing for density (meet needs of the aging population)
 - Targeted marketing
 - Dissatisfied people
 - Secondary homeowners (Canada-wide)
- Recreation opportunities
 - Children of business workers
- How to market what’s gorgeous
 - Rivers
 - Articulate what you love about PG
- Manage and anticipate for high growth, but foster “community” feel
- Transportation
 - Paths that lead to a more beautiful downtown

Regional strategies

- Link employers with First Nations community
- Strengthen the green image

Strengthening Strategies 'at Risk' in Moderate Growth Scenarios

Strategy at risk: Focus growth to downtown and commercial centres

- **At risk because directing development downtown can be a hard-decision** → need political will - Low growth may lead to further urban sprawl because it drives an “open for business” mentality that welcomes development at any cost
- Low growth does not mean no change – there has been lots of development without growth over the years, serves to prove that “improvement” can happen without growth
- Demographic profile, i.e. aging, will still spur new development
- Can develop downtown/centres in low growth
 - e.g. downsizing housing market
- Anchor-area node seems to make it work
- Bolster the improvement of existing neighbourhood centres in a low growth scenario
- People will move downtown provided AQ improvements and aesthetically pleasing environment
 - Incentives to support
 - Improve transit focused on this area

- Target University market into downtown: AQ not necessarily an issue for high turnover populations like students
- Only certain types of development should be allowed downtown. Strategically determine what kind and where you want development – zoning. Carried through strategies and policy; council direction in terms of encouraging specific developments through life-cycle costing.
- Perception of what goes on in d/t PG needs to change: it is not a dangerous place to live. Changing perceptions should be a priority. A “no-growth” strategy cannot be leaving D/T the way it is. It is inhibiting Prince George growth the way it is, and is a disincentive to immigration.
- Specific objectives should be maintained in the case of new development. Council cannot just accept “anything” for new growth. Encourage a model of controlled development in a low-growth situation. Ensure the quality of investment: specify the objectives of construction, have a grading system leading to an approval method. i.e. a sustainability checklist for new development.
- Protect public investments at the cost of public dollars; policy direction and regulation are necessary for this.

Strategy at risk: Enhance desired growth areas

- **At risk because may be limited by funding**
- Apply a life-cycle costing to fees to Greenfield development. i.e.: the developer should pay for infrastructure for new developments - the saved funds

can be diverted to revitalization of existing developments: parks, public spaces, downtown core.

- Look at the economic incentives and disincentives for sprawl. Why is it cheaper to do Greenfield developments? How can governments potentially get involved in addressing this? Focus public resources on reclaiming brownfield land for redevelopment. What incentives are there for reinvestment and redevelopment in existing development?
- Market it as something as unique and environmentally desirable, seek outside financial resources (i.e. Provincial and Federal Governments).
- Develop these infrastructure systems to serve an area that “makes sense”.
- Cost-balancing with other systems (e.g. heat downtown streets so that you don’t have to plow them).

Strategy at risk: Nodal patterns

- ***At risk because capacity to develop new neighbourhood social spaces may be limited by funding***
- This might be less sensitive to growth than suggested - Low-growth might spur the community to come together more (as they do in many places after a disaster or major change).
- Putting emphasize/responsibility into the community and neighbourhoods and social connections. Might be the only way in a low growth scenario to see positive changes
- Utilize existing neighbourhood spaces (closed schools) to encourage community enhancement (gardens, etc).

- Seed/initial funding might be necessary.
- Have neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood discussions about what is needed (public participation).
- Emphasize character or heritage nature of existing neighbourhoods – citizenship, social identify of place, create safer healthier environment.
- Can balance incentives vs. regulations
- Can improve safety.

Strategy at risk: Develop district energy system

- ***At risk because densities may not be high enough to support them***
- Is a perfect incentive to directing development and business downtown
- An attraction to growth, especially if it is cost-competitive source of heating/cooling

Strategy at risk: Enhance community attractiveness

- ***At risk because heritage revitalization may be a hard sell without higher land values***
- Heritage example - Perceptions vary
- Taxation base → “attractiveness” becomes lower priority
- University / community partnerships to mobilize
- There are lower-cost improvements: such as increasing pride and celebration of culture.

Other highlights

- Increase community pride:

- This strategy is not necessarily funding dependent! (see Nodal Patterns, above – community may come together and build pride as a result of their activities)
- Safety:
 - Main factor is **not** just policing! Giving troublesome kids something to do or somewhere to go is important.
- Strategies related to cultural change:
 - Can be improved by regulation rather than education. i.e. you must recycle x% of waste. Carpool lanes.

Early Actions

Key Question: “What significant early actions should we undertake?”

The Prince George community is ready for action – they want to see immediate progress. In two areas, early actions could easily be identified, and draft strategies integrated across all strategy areas – collaboration and education. Therefore, participants were asked to consider the draft actions in these areas and explore early actions. Participants were split into four groups:

- (a) two focused on collaboration strategies; and
- (b) two focused on education strategies.

Based on the draft strategies and actions from the strategy workshops, each group was asked to identify early actions that should be pursued and to discuss why. This discussion highlighted a few key actions and produced a set of preliminary criteria for selecting other early actions.

Criteria for selecting early actions

- Foundational - Root actions that must be in place before other crucial strategies can be implemented
- Actions that have ‘wow’ factor, demonstrating progress visibly to the public and fostering support
- Efficient and effective – the action addresses many goals at once and/or has a high impact on priority goals

Early Actions

3 early actions were identified as top priorities by the group. For each one, its performance vs. the above criteria is noted in brackets:

1. Develop shared resources and information tools to streamline education and collaboration (fundamental, will take time, but no immediate wow factor)
 - To set up:
 - possible pilot project with limited number of agencies (e.g. YAP, City, library to start)
 - Develop two mechanisms, each aimed to attract complementary users
 - a face-to-face service centre, e.g. a community and social health centre downtown; a “one-stop-shop” sustainability facility
 - develop a web portal as a community portal, building on myPG.
 - the web portal could also function as a “sharing wall” for resource organizations
 - disseminate information through both mechanisms
 - inform the public on incentives, programs available to them, e.g. social grant clearing house (NEW)
 - inform partnering organizations about programs, plans to facilitate alignment and coordination

- include features that would draw locals to visit regularly (e.g. the website would be a true community portal, not just an information page; the service centre could be associated with other uses that attract people regularly, such as the libraries or the farmers' market)
 - expand the myPG brand to advertise successes
 - celebrate current successes and build-upon them
 - in collaboration, such as formal partnerships, improved coordination (e.g. identifying and resolving any gaps, overlaps among major economic development initiatives (OBAC, iPG, NDIT))
 - e.g. bumper stickers – “proud parent of a myPG student”
2. Prioritize and build momentum on bio-energy research and production (wow factor, direct linkage to exemplify the goals)
- PG as demo site in bio-energy
 - Explore industrial partnerships in land use
 - Use university resources to fullest – use myPG as example
3. Signature project downtown through P3 (Public private partnerships) (wow factor, direct linkage to many goals possible, foundational to return people to downtown)
- design and development of buildings and infrastructure that are beneficial to the community and that the community can be

proud to own and share with the outside. The group agreed that Prince George is in need of a “signature” draw, something that gives the community a real sense of identity

- P3 project for downtown urban node
- explore industrial partnerships in land use
- utilize university resources to fullest – use myPG as example
- signature eco-building downtown – 6 storey wood (NEW)
- this could be the site of the face-to-face service centre described above for community education and information

Other ideas noted during the discussions included:

- Alternative transportation initiatives:
 - Provide financial subsidies to encourage the use of bicycles.
 - Active transportation initiatives can be quick wins
 - Partner with major employers (PGRH Cancer Centre) on new high-profile Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs
 - Prohibit parking where it would block bike lanes
 - Highlight spinoff benefits of active transportation – it’s enjoyable, social, healthy
- Childhood education:
 - Begin initiatives now to build long-term support for two key initiatives: climate change and food/agriculture

- Climate change:
 - Have climate change section on myPG or city website to show importance.
 - Education on CC and its importance and how strong the evidence is. Disconnect between effects and awareness.
 - 'climate change theatre program' going to schools.
 - Important to note will not see immediate results
- Food/agriculture:
 - Reintroduce knowledge of agriculture, especially in schools
 - build on existing 'farm to school' programs
- Education
 - Resource usage: installing smart meters in homes is an important action to work towards.
 - Demonstration projects: create an environmentally sensitive place/demonstration project. Set an example/leadership role, whether it be homes, neighbourhoods or commercial businesses.
- Other:
 - Coordinate and stack incentives and partnerships between levels of government and industry
 - Collaborate on regulatory enforcement
 - Create new partnerships
- Move motivation and responsibility from institutions to community and grassroots engagement
- Advocate for provincial and federal governments on funding: they already fund, but not effectively (stimulus funding) and rules in place result in much of the funding not getting allocated and dispersed
- Buildings: Expand outreach by incorporating innovative products into home shows – this is helpful for promoting green homes.
- Move quickly on recycling.
- Greater engagement can be an early commitment
 - Youth and seniors
 - Recognition of contributions
- Help culture evolve through communications: City can begin a dialogue with developers – constructive dialogue on services, backed up by studies such as life-cycle costing of infrastructure
- Support neighbourhood-scale action by sharing responsibility for supporting neighbourhood meetings and communications