



Dawson Creek Sustainable Community

Introduction

The process outlined in this document represents the Sustainable Community Planning Process that the City of Dawson Creek completed. The steps outlined in this document are the results of refinements and adaptations to our original thinking at the outset of this project. It is important to understand that the process outlined here should be understood as one example of Sustainable Planning and that many processes are possible.

This document provides:

- a rationale and goal for pursuing a Sustainable Community Planning Process
- an outline of the Sustainable Community Planning Process in Dawson Creek
 - Pre-planning phase
 - Phase 1 – Vision
 - Phase 2 – Baseline
 - Phase 3 – Actions
 - Phase 4 – Indicators
- communication strategy
- lessons learned
- a “roadmap” document with timelines and responsibilities

Rationale and goal

Sustainability is the ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. A cornerstone of sustainability is the recognition that all aspects of society and the natural environment are interconnected. Sustainability planning helps communities realize their visions for a sustainability and provides the framework to integrate sustainability thinking into every day decision-making.

The primary goal of this process was to ensure that all of Dawson Creek’s policies, plans and actions are in accordance with its principles of sustainability. The sustainability planning process involved Council, staff, citizens, organizations and businesses who provided diverse perspectives and support for the long-term vision of a sustainable community.

Steps in the Sustainability Planning Process

Pre-planning

Key outcomes:

- Identification of participants
- Create process roadmap and timelines for four development phases

The first component of the pre-planning phase was to consider which groups were going to be involved in the planning process. Included among these groups were:

- Leadership team (LT) – the leadership team was responsible for helping to set the direction of the planning process, providing guidance and vision, and taking a lead on various initiatives. The leadership team also provided management functions for the process, including overseeing the process, and ensuring that implementation and monitoring occur. The leadership team was composed of the City staff (Director of Planning and Development) and consultants from the Pembina Institute.
- Mayor and Council (MC) – Mayor and Council were key to providing leadership and vision to the process. They were also involved at regular intervals by providing approval to the process at key decision points.
- City Staff (CS) – City staff were involved throughout the process to help identify opportunities for change, contribute ideas and learn about sustainability.
- Community Members (CM) – Community members were involved at key points in the process to provide input and ideas and to learn about sustainability.

During the pre-planning phase, the initial "roadmap" outlining how the process would unfold was created (included at the end of this document). For each of the four (4) Phases, the roadmap outlined goals, timelines and responsibilities. The initial roadmap was influenced by principles from the Natural Step as well as from Calgary's and Whistler's Sustainability Planning Processes. As Dawson Creek's process moved forward, adaptations were continually made to this original roadmap in order to maintain a flexible and responsive planning process.

Phase 1: Vision

Key outcomes:

- Sustainability training
- Revised sustainable vision and mission statements
- Communicate new vision and mission statements to the community

As the first step in Phase 1, a representative from The Natural Step Canada provided two days of training in Natural Step principles. This training created a common understanding of the principles of sustainability among the people who played key roles in the forthcoming stages of the planning process (those listed under the pre-planning phase).

The training was offered on two days, the first day for members of the community engaged in various aspects of sustainability and the second for City staff and Council. The training not only helped to get people thinking about sustainability, it provided a common understanding of its principles and was an excellent launch for the Sustainability Planning project.

The City's Vision and Mission statements were also revised during Phase 1. The Leadership Team and Council crafted new statements based on input gathered through the public consultation process in 2003. While the old vision statement reflected the economic aspects of the community's priorities, the new vision emphasizes all aspects of sustainability.

Below are the City's old and new vision statements to offer a comparison. See the website (www.planningforpeople.ca) for the new mission statement.

Old vision statement:

To establish Dawson Creek & District as

- the place to live, work and retire in the Peace River area;
- the business and service centre for the Peace River area; and
- the transportation centre of the Peace River area.

New vision statement:

Dawson Creek will be a visionary community that works together for innovative social, cultural, economic and environmental vitality.

The new vision and mission statements were communicated by Council to the community through various means such as press releases and on the City's website (s). As well, each department was tasked with the development of yearly goals and objectives demonstrating how their contributions to the new Vision.

Phase 2 - Baseline

Key Outcomes:

- Document review
- Interviews with key Council, staff and community members
- Sustainability Baseline study

The City hired HBLanarc to complete a Sustainability Baseline study, which reviewed existing plans and policies. The goal of Phase 2 was to determine how existing plans and policies are working together to promote sustainability, where inconsistencies may be occurring and where gaps exist in current planning work. With the help of the HBLanarc, information was gathered through interviews with key staff and community members, as well as document review.

The following municipal plans, reports and documents were reviewed:

- Official Community Plan
- Subdivision & Development Servicing Bylaw No. 2616, 1991
- Zoning Bylaw
- Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy Improvements for New Homes in DC
- Heritage Strategy for Dawson Creek
- Parks & Recreation Master Plan
- Communications Plan (which included the Alaska Highway Corridor Thematic Strategy,

Dawson Creek Interpretive Strategy, Dawson Creek Downtown Revitalization Plan; Alaska Highway House Concept Plan)

Other Resources reviewed as part of the document review included:

- Pease River Regional District – Solid Waste Management Plan Review – Policy Options
- BC Stats – Community Fact Sheet, 2001 for Dawson Creek
- BC Housing – Housing Profile 20063

Council and staff were asked to provide information on their current plans and policies, new initiatives, ideas for increasing the sustainability of the City, and any other input into the process, including:

- Ryan MacIvor, Tourism Development
- John Malcolm, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
- Marilyn Belak, Council Member
- Chante Patterson-Elden, Facility Manager
- Calvin Kruk, Mayor
- Kevin Henderson, Director of Operations
- Bryna Casey, Youth Coordinator
- Darcy Perrin, Parks Manager
- Melanie Turcotte, Sustainability Clerk

Through this process, 10 key areas of focus were identified: Arts and Culture, Community Planning, Economic Development, Energy, Governance, Green Space, Social Well-being, Transportation, Waste and Water. For each of these areas of focus, HBLanarc assessed current plans and initiatives and compared them against a sustainability framework. They identified the areas in which Dawson Creek was doing well and the areas in which the City could improve.

For an overview of what's happening in each of these areas, see the individual pages listed on the top left of the page of the www.planningforpeople.ca site, which was created specifically to document the community's progress towards sustainability. For the detailed assessment of each area, see the Sustainability Baseline, also on the website.

Phase 3 - Strategies and Actions

Key outcomes

- Identification of goals for each focus area
- Identification of next steps required for each major policy and or plan

In Phase 3, the Leadership Team worked with Council to adapt the goal statements put forward by HBLanarc to identify a goal for each focus area. These statements are as follows:

- ***Sustainability Planning*** - To create a framework for decision making and for the integration of all planning processes.
- ***Arts & Culture*** - To develop a comprehensive Arts and Culture focus, integrated into the community for Economic and Social well being

- **Community Planning** - To create a compact, complete and dense community.
- **Economic Development** - To develop a robust economy that sustains the community's goals.
- **Energy** - To promote green building practices to increase livability and reduce energy and resource consumption.
- **Governance** - To develop governance and Citizen engagement and education processes to ensure an equitable and progressive society.
- **Green Space** - To create a multi-Tasked open space that supports both community and ecological uses.
- **Social Well-Being** - To promote the health and well-Being of our citizens as essential characteristics of a sustainable community.
- **Transportation** - To develop an environmentally-Friendly, community-Oriented Transportation system.
- **Water** - To develop a comprehensive water strategy that ensures a sustainable supply for all.

During Phase 3, strategies and actions were identified to help fill in the gaps identified in Phase 2 and to move each area of focus towards its specific goal. Based on the results of the Sustainability Baseline in Phase 2, the Leadership Team determined where changes to existing plans would be needed or if new plans would be required. In some cases, this required further follow-up with staff members in various departments. The Leadership Team also identified additional documents to those reviewed in the Sustainability Baseline in Phase 2.

For example, in the area of Community Planning, several potential improvements to Dawson Creek's OCP were identified. To ensure a robust process, the City undertook a land use planning charrette with HBLanarc that, through a community based process, identified the necessary policy changes that will be made to the OCP during its next review cycle. For a full description of this process, see the Community Planning page of the website (www.planningforpeople.ca).

The following table is a summary of the major plans in Dawson Creek. The table shows the status of each plan during the Phase 2 assessment, the identified required action, the current status and the expected completion date. For a more detailed description of each area, see the corresponding page on the website (www.planningforpeople.ca).

Policy	Status in Phase 2	Required action	Status Spring 2009	Expected completion
1. Community Planning				
Land Use Charrette	Required	Begin	Complete	Complete
OCP revision	Existing	Review	Underway	December 2009
Subdivision Bylaw	Existing	Review	Underway	December 2009
2. Transportation				
Transportation Plan	Required	Begin	Underway	December 2009
3. Energy Supply and Use				
Green Buildings Policy	Underway	Continue	Complete	Complete
Community Energy Plan	Underway	Continue	Complete	Complete
Corporate Energy Plan	Existing	Continue	Complete	Complete
Carbon Neutral Dawson Creek	Underway	Continue	Underway	May 2009
4. Green Space				
Parks and Rec Master Plan	Existing	Review	Complete	Complete
5. Waste and Recycling				
Regional Waste Management Plan	Underway	Complete review	Under review	TBD
Dawson Creek Waste Management Contract	Underway	Complete review	Under review	TBD
6. Water Supply and Use				
Water Quality Assurance Plan	Existing	Review	Complete	On going
Stormwater Mgmt Plan	Underway	Continue	Underway	December 2009
Water Demand Mgmt Plan	Required	Begin	Underway	December 2009
Watershed Mgmt Plan	Existing	Review	Underway	TBD
7. Arts and Culture				
Cultural Master Plan	Required	Begin	Not started	December 2010
Heritage Master Plan	Existing	Review	Complete	On going
8. Social well-being				
Social Plan	Underway	Continue	Complete	Complete
9. Governance				
Excellence Program	Underway	Continue	Level III - Application Underway	On going
10. Economy				
Economic Dev. Plan	Existing	Update	Not started	December 2010

Phase 4 - Indicators

Key outcomes:

- Develop indicators
- Assign responsibility for monitoring progress towards goals

During Phase 4, a series of targets and indicators were developed for each of the 10 focus areas. The indicators were chosen based on best practices and readily available data. Through discussion with staff in each department, the Leadership Team determined what data was already being collected (for example, water turbidity or greenhouse gas data). The Leadership Team attempted to choose indicators based on readily available data, but in some cases additional data collection will be necessary. The table below outlines the indicators that have been chosen for each area.

Area	Indicators	Source of Info
Water	Turbidity	Current records
	River level	Current records
	Storage	Current records
	Daily usage	Current records
	Precipitation levels	Current records
	Per capita consumption	Current records
Transportation	Public transit	BC transit
	Municipal fleet fuel consumption	CEP - Corporate Baseline
	Modal breakdown (commuting)	Census Data
	Kms of walking trails	Parks and Rec - Maps
Energy	Energy use and associated GHGs for:	
	Corporate	CEP - Corporate Baseline
	Residential	CEEI
	Industrial	CEEI
	Commercial	CEEI
Land Use Planning	% of green space	Engineering/Planning - Maps
	Density	Engineering/Planning - Maps
	Mix of land uses	Engineering/Planning - Maps

Culture	TBD	South Peace Arts Council
	The City is working with the SPAC to determine the list of indicators	
Governance	Voter turnout (%)	Corporate Administration
Economic Development	# of new business licenses and renewals	Business License Inspector
	Employment/unemployment	DC Social Plan
Social		
Housing	Housing affordability	DC Social Plan
	Vacancy rate	DC Social Plan
Food security	# of farmers' markets and community gardens	DC Social Plan
	# of gardens grown in Dawson Creek and Surrounding area.	DC Social Plan
Public safety	Crimes/100,000 people	DC Social Plan
Literacy	TBD	Canadian Council on Learning - Composite Learning Index
	The City is working with the DC Literacy Society to finalize the list of indicators	DC Literacy Society
Youth	# of childcare spaces	DC Social Plan
	% of 18 year-olds who did not graduate	DC Social Plan
Accessibility	TBD	Measuring Up the North Committee
	The City is working with the MUTN committee to determine the list of indicators	

Parks and Rec	% of green space	Parks & Rec
	% forest cover	Parks & Rec
	Kms walking trails	Parks & Rec
	Participation	Parks & Rec

Waste	TBD	
	The City is working with the PRRD to finalize the list of indicators	Peace River Regional District

For each indicator, The Leadership Team chose an appropriate time interval for measurement (usually between every 1 and 5 years) and assigned responsibility for collecting indicator data and tracking progress in each area. The Director of Corporate Planning and Sustainability will be responsible for overseeing the collection of data. A committee consisting of Council, senior staff and community partners will be convened annually to assess the indicator data and identify actions that may need to be taken in order to keep the City moving towards its goals.

Communication Strategy

In conjunction with the Leadership Team, Peace Photographics developed the Planning For People website (www.planningforpeople.ca) to help communicate the results of the process over the course of the project. The website provides information to the Dawson Creek community on the City's sustainability process as well as providing a portal to resources and opportunities for citizens to take individual action. The website is also intended to be a repository of all of Dawson Creek's initiatives, made available for any other municipalities interested in pursuing similar initiatives. The website is a unique and comprehensive snap shot of all of the initiatives currently underway in Dawson Creek. The website is a living document that allows for continual updates as new projects and initiatives develop.

City representatives including Council and senior staff also traveled extensively throughout the Province sharing its experiences with other communities, local government associations, UBCM, NCMA, FCM and others. At the local level, presentations and discussions were held with local service clubs, Chamber of Commerce, Credit Union, Arts, Recreation, Youth and seniors groups, to gather support for the community's vision for sustainability.

Lessons Learned

Despite the challenges inherent in creating a conversation with the citizens of a community of more than 12,000 in 2003, the resulting call for a more sustainable city led to the creation of a new vision and mandate and has proven to be well worth the time and effort. The outcome - a clear, articulated vision for the future of the city – led to a clear course of action and exceptional buy-in from the community.

- ❖ Therefore, the importance of **communication** to and from City Hall is one of the primary lessons learned. Some of the most effective tools employed include:
 - Public Visioning Process
 - www.planningforpeople.ca website

- Frequent Press Release Updates
- Our Community newspaper
- Land Use Planning Charrette
- Creating a strong brand and supporting it with public presence – Pull-up Banners, Posters, Information Brochures, etc. at local Fairs and Public Events

Organization and leadership are critical to the success of the city's efforts. A leader with responsibility for implementation, communication, and the creation of partnerships with other organizations with similar objectives and vision has been essential to the success of the city's efforts. Leadership providing an example for others to follow, has led to cultural changes, both at city hall and in the community at large.

- ❖ Therefore, the importance of committed **leadership**, political and administrative, has been one of the significant lessons.

During the initial years of the Sustainable Dawson Creek initiative, what seemed the obvious or appropriate course of action sometimes did not turn out to be the optimal path. A high degree of flexibility and continual reassessment and consultation became key attributes that led to success where failure might otherwise have been the outcome.

- ❖ Therefore, **continual re-evaluation, flexibility, and adaptability** proved essential.

The hierarchical and complex nature of city governance can be a hindrance to implementation of principles of sustainability unless all departments representing all aspects of influence are integrated into the decision making process. By applying the principles of sustainability to the entity of the City, including personnel, water, public works, etc. it was possible to optimize the human and physical resources available and to create ownership of the process throughout the organization.

- ❖ Therefore, **integrated decision making** was essential to the success.

It is clear that sustainability is not exclusive to issues of the environment. A community's economics, social well-being and culture must also be sustainable. Social service agencies, user groups and special interest organizations are asked for input. This fosters a high level of ownership and provides unique perspectives to city hall. By employing the services of professionals in the field, the city is able to optimize its efforts.

- ❖ Therefore, **partnerships** within the city, other levels of government, and NGOs make a significant contribution to ongoing success.
 - Special Interests: Youth, Seniors, Aboriginals, Health, Conservation, etc.
 - Provincial and Federal Governments
 - NEAT (Northern Environmental Action Team)
 - PEC (Peace Energy Cooperative)
 - Consultants (Pembina Institute, The Natural Step and HB Lanarc)

- Service Clubs (Rotary, Lions, Kinsmen)

Some of the challenges:

- Convenience can still foster resistance to change (plastic bags, idling)
- Keeping momentum and maintaining excitement
- Skepticism
- Engaging youth can be difficult
- Process – an all encompassing, overarching and integrated approach to all decisions is challenging to achieve
- Consideration of all values, qualitative as well as quantitative, to avoid bottom line thinking that disqualifies good ideas on financial cost solely

Conclusion

The challenges that arise in any planning and visioning process should not impede the planners, or shine a bad light on the process, but rather teach lessons, and help to foresee similar challenges in future planning. They should serve as reminders that each step requires a process, and each process will bring new challenges to light, which will help us make the right decisions, and create plans that take the well-being of the entire community into consideration. From the initial visioning sessions with the community, to the initiative outcomes, the process has had many positive influences on the community and the planners, as well as presenting challenges that helped make the planning process stronger. Communication, education, and a broad decision making process have helped the City of Dawson Creek make viable steps toward its vision of a sustainable community.

Dawson Creek Sustainability Planning Process Roadmap

LT = Leadership Team (City Staff, The Pembina Institute)

MC = Mayor and Council

CS = City Staff

CM = Community Members

Cons = Other Consultants

NS = Natural Step

HBL = HBLanarc

Phase 1 - Vision						
Key Outcome	Responsibility					Timeline
	LT	MC	CS	CM	Cons	
1. Sustainability Training						
a) Identify Trainer (Natural Step) and organize training	X		X		NS	August 2006
b) Participate in training	X	X	X	X	NS	September 2006
2. Revise Vision and Mission Statements						
a) Draft new vision and mission statements based on community consultation	X	X		X		November 2006
b) Council approves new statements		X				January 2007
3. Council communicates vision						
a) Communicate vision to City departments and public using website, press releases	X	X				January 2007

Phase 2 - Baseline						
Key Outcome	Responsibility					Timeline
	LT	MC	CS	CM	Cons	
1. Document Review						
a) Identify and compile documents	X		X			
b) Review documents against sustainability framework					HBL	May 2007
2. Interviews with Key Staff Members						
a) Interview key staff members			X		HBL	August 2007
3. Compilation of Sustainability Baseline						
a) Assess each focus area against sustainability framework					HBL	September 2007
b) Write report					HBL	December 2007
c) Submit report to Council for approval		X				December 2007

						2007
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Phase 3 - Actions						
Key Outcome	Responsibility					Timeline
	LT	MC	CS	CM	Cons	
1. Identification of goals						
a) Determine goals for each focus area	X	X	X		HBL	February 2008
2. Identification of next steps						
a) For each focus area, assess relevant plans and documents to determine changes or additions necessary to reach goals	X		X			June 2008
b) Communicate goals and next steps to relevant departments	X		X			Ongoing

Phase 4 - Indicators						
Key Outcome	Responsibility					Timeline
	LT	MC	CS	CM	Cons	
1. Identify indicators for each focus area						
a) Work with staff to identify data that is already being collected	X		X			October 2008
b) Determine indicators	X					December 2009
2. Assign responsibility						
a) Work with staff to determine responsibility for data collection for the indicators and timelines	X		X			Ongoing