



Summary:

Common Ground for Community Sustainability

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Summary: Common Ground for Community Sustainability

Integration of Economic Development and Planning for Healthy Communities

March 4, 2010

1. Introduction

The Common Ground for Community Sustainability session held on March 4, 2010 brought together professionals to discuss the concepts and reality of integrating planning efforts for community sustainability. More than 100 administrators, economic development officers, community planners, parks and recreation staff from local and First Nations government along with health professionals from the Province exchanged ideas about collaborating on common ground between planning disciplines. The session was held simultaneously in Cranbrook, Kamloops, Kelowna, Nelson and Williams Lake by video-conference, and while working to some success with technology and having much more to learn, were able to reduce the otherwise large footprint for such a gathering.

Participants heard seven presentations on various themes integrating economic development and planning for healthy communities. They explored community challenges and exchanged new ideas with resourceful colleagues on key planning principles. They also had the opportunity to learn about applied models for integrated planning and economic development, examine different planning perspectives and collaborative efforts between agencies, and hear about links between health and community planning.

Participants expressed a desire to invite other sectors to the collaboration dialogue, regional working groups to discuss specific actions, more formally developed relationships to work together, and more case studies on how communities can apply integrated models. This exploration of common ground - with its emphasis on community economic development and links to health - between separate disciplines planning for community sustainability may be viewed as a starting point for future dialogue between participants and possible organizers of future sessions.

2. Purpose

The Common Ground partnership arose from discussions between BC Recreation and Parks Association, the Interior Health Authority and Fraser Basin Council (FBC) Smart Planning for Communities program to gather professionals and explore links between economic development, planning, recreation and health. As local government planners in the region had identified economic development as a priority for discussion, the partnership expanded to include the RuralBC Secretariat, a rural economic diversification initiative of the Ministry for Community and Rural Development.

The Common Ground partnership invited professionals to explore partnership opportunities and to foster integrated planning and leverage collaboration between economic development, health and planning, with the envisioned outcome of long-term integrated planning for sustainable communities.

Objectives for the Common Ground session included:

- promoting inter-jurisdictional sharing and collaboration around economic diversification, health, recreation and planning opportunities
- linking economic diversification to planning for community sustainability, including health and built environment objectives
- developing an understanding of foundational information for linkages between health and the built environment
- raising awareness of the resources and roles that professionals in economic development, health, planning and recreation can provide in understanding and planning for sustainable communities

Evaluations of the session from participants reflected a generally positive reception of the objectives, presentation content and subsequent dialogue. The objectives to promote integrated planning between economic development and community planning, and gathering professionals across sectors for this discussion were embraced. Some noted that more networking time, fewer speakers and more in-depth presentations with more examples would have been of value. One of the objectives - to develop an ideas and action plan for specific community challenges - was not fully realized, however, participants shared in their evaluations many actions to integrate ideas from the session into their work: instead of providing action plans for a few to take away, the session generated ideas for many individuals to take back to their work places.

3. Themes

Several key themes emerged during the Common Ground session and in the evaluations:

- increased interest in collaborative practice between planning and economic development, with the potential of integration, efficiencies and competitiveness
- discerning that a 'community development' approach and need to diversify the economy can support communities to become more resilient and adaptable to change
- raised awareness of the potential for developing healthy built environments, and thus healthier communities, by considering the benefits of recreation and health inputs to community planning and economic development
- appreciating that dialogue across sectors increases opportunities for collaboration and action
- recognizing that governance, policy development and formally developed working relationships can support integrated planning for healthier communities
- understanding that taking an integrated, broader and long-term approach to planning will support community sustainability and overcome short-term disconnect between disciplines

Participants were eager to explore the relationship between community economic development, community planning, health and recreation, and how collaboration could produce positive results for the health of their communities. Participants also showed a willingness to take action in their own communities as a result of the workshop, and in writing indicated a better understanding of the roles of other stakeholders and the value of long term planning for sustainable communities.

4. Presentations

Seeking Common Ground Part 1 and 2

Susanne Theurer - Sustainability Facilitator, Fraser Basin Council Smart Planning for Communities

Kevin Poole - Economic Development Association of BC (and Economic Development Officer, Vernon)

The Economics of Health and Climate Action and Health

Pam Moore - Environmental Health Officer, Interior Health Authority

Building Healthy Communities

Jason Emmert - BCRPA / Eco-Plan Consultant

Pairing Planning and Economic Development

Kim Flick - Manager of Planning and Building

Kevin Poole - Economic Development Officer City of Vernon (President of EDABC)

Keeping it Real in Golden

Cleopatra Corbett - Manager of Development Services, Town of Golden

Delivering on Economic Transition and Diversification

Diana Brooks (Kootenay Boundary Region) and **Myles Bruns** (Thompson- Okanagan Region)

RuralBC Secretariat (RBCS) of the Ministry of Community and Rural Development

See *Appendix 8 - Presentation Summaries* at the end of this document for a summary of the presentations outlined above. Presentations are also available for download at the *Common Ground for Sustainability, 2010* – presentations portal <http://smartplanning.pcna.ca/files/CommonGround/>

5. Dialogue

The Community Challenge presented an opportunity for small groups to address specific challenges communities face in integrating planning efforts on economic diversification, community planning, health and built environment, and more generally, on the themes of economic, social, environmental and cultural sustainability.

First, the participants told their own story in the context of Common Ground themes.

Participants shared stories about small communities at risk due to devastation of beetle-kill, difficulties in communicating watershed management needs, reliance on automobile and rural subdivision approval, mental health and economic development issues in fringe communities, lack of leadership in government, traditional thinking and associated barriers, isolation due to aging. Finding ways to capitalize on underlying strengths was discussed by the participants: private initiatives, tax incentives, sustainability checklists, win-win partnerships, collaboration and community involvement, resource inventories and sharing, shared responses, shared services, value-added integration between development and government, good history on community engagement, progressive politicians and volunteers.

Second, the group selected one of the stories to work with as a community challenge, and answered several questions to frame the discussion (history, external/internal factors, stakeholders, aspirations). Participants answered how the community could work toward resolving its challenge (underlying strengths, opportunities to collaborate, description of contributions, necessary process, partnerships, actions, monitoring), such as the following:

Transportation in communities | Cranbrook, Kelowna, Nelson, Kamloops, Williams Lake

How can issues of congestion, air quality, and viable alternatives be addressed (especially in winter climate areas) while changing the perception of people? Discussed how to address issues such as land-use planning to reduce rural sprawl, 'walkability' in order to create better environments using trails, cost of infrastructure, lack of community-mindedness. Actions discussed for bus service, carpooling, trail use and leading by example, promoting, incentives, starting small, setting and meeting clear targets, .

Economic and community revitalization in small rural communities | Kelowna, Williams Lake, Kamloops

How can communities revitalize the downtown core? How can communities rebrand and create an identity for their community? How to tap into economic development for marketing? Look at success stories from other communities. Look to the business community to create an 'experience' (success?) in the community

Link to regional tourism and economic development planning. How can small communities work together as a region?

Mental health, economic development and social inclusion | Kamloops

How do we address issues of poverty? How do we address lack of affordable housing and lack of services and resources in rural communities?

Long term community sustainability community | Kamloops

A small community, north-west of Kamloops seeks to increase its opportunities to collaborate and integrate its planning efforts. How can it respond to build on its strengths and shift current state? Identify stakeholders, explore 20-year aspirations, focus on assets, work collectively as a group of small regional communities, participate in regional planning events

Air quality and safe alternative transportation | Williams Lake

(this Community Challenge is offered in full below as a sample)

Why is this challenge important at this time?

- Air quality is a historical issue in Williams Lake, since the days of the Beehive burners
- There is public interest and discourse on alternative transportation for various health and quality of life indicators

Which external / internal factors are driving the challenge?

- Williams Lake is doing an ICSP (Integrated Community Sustainability Plan) right now – it's an opportunity to discuss other ideas/options
- "alternate" transportation – even walking, is a disconnect with the Cariboo pick-up truck culture
- Moving people to action is a hard thing to do in Williams Lake
- Aging population – air quality impacting health, they want to be healthy and active
- We want to attract professionals and young families who may have a different culture when it comes to transportation
- Safety – there are some trails and good bike routes, but there are some bad intersections which block access – these section are not connected

Where do economic development, community planning, recreation and health professions intersect to create a challenge for this community?

- Business development and attraction – big box stores on the edges that you have to drive everywhere to get to
- Building roads and intersections that are not friendly to alternative transportation, to access this kind of economic development – counter intuitive to encouraging alternative transportation.
- More cars, more driving, more roads, more dust, dangerous
- Links with health – activity, childhood obesity (not safe to ride bikes), air quality, seniors mobility and access – improve active transportation options – create more opportunities for improved health outcomes

Who is affected directly / indirectly by this community challenge (who are the stakeholders)?

- Ministry of Transportation, Public Works, business groups, bike clubs, seniors groups, persons with disabilities groups, families, Chamber of Commerce

Which key stakeholders have not been involved?

- Chamber of Commerce, hospital physicians, Interior Health – Public Health

Actions:

1. Summarize Common Ground information and send to the Air Quality Roundtable (AQR)
2. Invite Interior Health's Air Quality expert to the AQR meeting
3. Bike to Work week in June – issue a challenge to community leaders to try and get around Williams Lake with alternative transportation – make it public so they can't say no. www.breatheasywilliamslake.org

Finally, participants were encouraged to think about their own communities and actions they might take to resolve their challenges and actions they could take to integrate economic development, community planning, health and the built environment. They were asked to consider:

Short Term Outcomes for your own story / community challenge:

How will you create collaboration / partnerships to develop common ground for planning?

What are your "ideas and action" to leverage capacity development and collaboration for economic development, community planning, health and built environment?

Long term Outcomes for your own story / community challenge:

How will you foster integrated planning to build a more sustainable community?

The participants listed their actions for their own communities, a sampling of which include:

- More interaction and discussion between health, planning and economic development
- Collaborate with surrounding communities, regional district and First Nations
- Suggest a governance model for implementation – plans and policies are the easy part
- Work more consistently with internal and external stakeholders, critically review working relationships with local government

- Look at the bigger picture of climate change
- Will use this day as an example of action being taken to address sustainability issues
- Develop economic investment zones
- Provide exemptions for development permits for improvements less than \$75,000
- Integrate some sustainability issues into Official Community Plan
- Work with economic development officer to building working relationship such as Vernon
- Seek more opportunities to be more involved with community planning
- Press Interior Health to provide more time for staff to spend on community development
- Engaging stakeholders and communicating with partners from all organizations / agencies
- Need to attract others ... engage and motivate other local governments, First Nations leaders, school districts, developers, major employers [and many more]

... and requested more sessions of this type and venue for idea sharing: more on economic development perspectives to community development, more on community economic development, an Aboriginal component on this same subject, inviting a broader cross-section including the development community, shorter presentations and more networking, more answers for questions through managing the video-conference technology, more learning about and participation from other agencies.

6. Conclusion

The Common Ground partnership thanks the speakers, facilitators, note takers and participants who devoted a precious day to the subject of planning for common ground for sustainability. We came from wide-ranging professions in economic development, community planning, health, recreation and administration, and from across the Province from Cranbrook to Kamloops, Kelowna, Nelson and Williams Lake, from local and First Nations governments and non-government organizations. We shared and compared notes on collaboration and integration between professions, knowledge we know will benefit our communities in the short and long term.

Many of the objectives – collaboration, integration, linking separate planning disciplines, connecting health and built environment – for economic development and community planning for sustainability were met during the Common Ground session. This was reflected in the themes emerging during the dialogue and objectives that were shared by the participants in person and through the evaluations.

This Common Ground session is seen as a useful, preliminary foray into a dialogue to explore common ground between economic development, community planning, and health initiatives. It will serve as a stepping stone for other workshops such as this to focus on and raise awareness for the benefits of integrated practice, and generate more dialogue between professions, agencies and governments necessary to foster true integrated planning for community sustainability.

COMMON GROUND partners:

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Fraser Basin Council SPC program | Susanne Theurer stheurer@fraserbasin.bc.ca (250)809-6549

Interior Health Authority | Pam Moore pam.moore@interiorhealth.ca (250)868-7812

Ministry Community & Rural Development | Myles Bruns myles.bruns@gov.bc.ca (250)371-3931
and Diana Brooks diana.brooks@gov.bc.ca (250)426-1301



7. Appendix - Resources

Built Environment and Active Transportation (BEAT) - website

BC Recreation & Parks Association (BCRPA)

<http://www.physicalactivitystrategy.ca/index.php/beat/> or www.bcrpa.bc.ca

BC Climate Action Toolkit - website

a three-way partnership between The Province of BC, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and Smart Planning for Communities, a program of the Fraser Basin Council <http://www.toolkit.bc.ca/>

Common Ground for Sustainability, 2010 – presentations portal

BCRPA, Fraser Basin Council, Interior Health Authority, Ministry of Community and Rural Development partnership

<http://smartplanning.pcna.ca/files/CommonGround/>

Creating Healthy Communities, 2009 - guide for tools and actions

<http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/Portals/0/Downloads/CreatingHealthyCommunitiesGuide.pdf>

Foundations for a Healthier Built Environment, 2009 - summary paper

BC Provincial Health Services Authority

<http://www.phsa.ca/NR/rdonlyres/76D687CF-6596-46FE-AA9A-A536D61FB038/32052/PHSAreportHBEfoundations.pdf>

Fraser Basin Council *Smart Planning for Communities Program* - website smartplanningbc.ca

Healthy Communities – website

Smart Growth BC <http://smartgrowth.bc.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=197>

Healthy Community Environments - website

British Columbia Interior Health Authority

<http://www.interiorhealth.ca/health-and-safety.aspx?id=7874>

Healthy People, Healthy Performance, Healthy Profits: The case for business action on the socio-economic determinants of Health, 2008 The Conference Board of Canada

<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/documents.aspx?did=2818>

Mending Canada's frayed social safety net: The role of municipal governments, 2008 - theme report #6

Federation of Canadian Municipalities - Quality of Life in Canadian Communities Reporting System

http://www.fcm.ca/CMFiles/QofL6En_Embargp1KGE-3242010-6436.pdf

Planning for the Future: Age-Friendly and Disability-Friendly Official Community Plans, 2009

Union of BC Municipalities

<http://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Library/Policy~Topics/Healthy~Communities/Planning%20for%20the%20Future.pdf>

RuralBC Secretariat, Ministry of Rural and Community Development - website

<http://www.ruralbc.gov.bc.ca/> and http://www.cd.gov.bc.ca/ruralbc_secretariat/

Transportation Demand Management for Small and Mid-Size Communities, 2009

Fraser Basin Council

<http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/programs/tdm.html>

Walking Friends and Foes, 2009 – 3 minute video

Smart Growth BC

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjbHRa2MtNU>

8. APPENDIX - Presentation summaries

Note that the presentations summarized below are available for download at the *Common Ground for Sustainability, 2010* – presentations portal <http://smartplanning.pcna.ca/files/CommonGround/>

Seeking Common Ground Part 1 and 2

Susanne Theurer - Sustainability Facilitator, Fraser Basin Council Smart Planning for Communities (SPC)

Presented a case for finding and developing common ground between planning disciplines. Described a short-term planning disconnect resolved by a focus on long-term planning and initiating dialogue to integrate planning efforts between economic development, community planning and health and better understanding sustainability. Outlined the integrated planning process as a paradigm shift from narrow view to broad, across boundaries and building the collective. Discussed the importance of collaborating and benefits to developing capacity for community self-renewal and adaptation with a model illustrating strategic integration of disciplines and sustainability themes for cultural, social, ecological and economic community health.

Kevin Poole - Economic Development Association of BC (and Economic Development Officer, Vernon)

Spoke to investment attraction efforts by EDABC and Linx, BC's economic development team, defined economic development and typical local economic development programs. Described strengths and weaknesses for moving economic development forward, as well as a collaborative approach needed to ensure a competitive business environment.

The Economics of Health and Climate Action and Health

Pam Moore, Environmental Health Officer, Interior Health Authority

Described the “the upstream’ social, economic and environmental factors that affect health of individuals and populations before they engage with the ‘downstream’ health care system.” Spoke to reducing the costs associated with disease linked to physical inactivity. Described the means to improve economics of health and the links between the built environment and health outcomes.

On Climate Action and Health, presented impacts of climate change on health through physical, biological and socio-economic pathways and supporting community health objectives through greenhouse gas emission reduction. Stated it is time for engagement and partnerships to develop adaptive strategies.

Building Healthy Communities

Jason Emmert, BCRPA / Eco-Plan Consultant

Outlined the (12) healthy living goals and benefits of community policy for healthy communities. Highlighted the link between health, planning and economic development. Emphasized that physical environment design can make healthy living easy, and that the built environment has a profound impact on long-term community health. Explained that the healthy built environment is a function of getting people outdoors, building community and connecting neighbours, increasing access to healthy eating choices, cleaning the air and water.

Pairing Planning and Economic Development

Kim Flick Manager of Planning and Building

Kevin Poole, Economic Development Officer City of Vernon (and President of EDABC)

Presented respective planning and economic development goals, and their collaborative and integrated approach, which has made them more competitive, effective with implementation and has allowed the community to realize its vision faster. Shared issues related to a prior traditional approach (creates conflict, lack of certainty, delays in responding to client inquiries, disconnect between short term actions and long term goals), and benefits of their current approach to merge processes (shared vision, immediacy, certainty, innovation, team focus and trust).

Keeping it Real in Golden

Cleopatra Corbett, Manager of Development Services, Town of Golden

Described Golden’s (official) community planning process linking the built environment to progressive community objectives. Involving youth, working through challenges to find successes, finding common ground were themes during the process. Presented plan policies - building flexible bylaws and land uses, providing for amenity contributions, density bonuses, addressing affordable housing, increased park land dedication, trails,

community gardens, smart growth - and process of education, communication, collaboration to arrive at creative solutions and focus on long term health of all sustainability pillars.

Delivering on Economic Transition and Diversification

Diana Brooks (Kootenay Boundary Region) and **Myles Bruns** (Thompson- Okanagan Region)
RuralBC Secretariat (RBCS) of the Ministry of Community and Rural Development

Spoke on adapting to a 'global' world affecting every level of community - declining revenues, business closures, out-migration of young and working-age people, and more closures of large resource-sector employers - and the related need to diversify economies, and make communities more resilient and adaptable to change.

Several examples of capacity development provided: RBCS works in 7 regions of the province to support economic development activities and assist communities with social, economic and environmental sustainability initiatives. It also works to build capacity in economic and business opportunities, public services and infrastructure, skilled people, local leadership and participation, social capital and networks to create healthy resilient rural communities.