

Sustainable Development

CityPlan

Riley Park/South Cambie **RPSC**

What Does it Mean?

The commonly accepted definition of sustainable development is "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs." (Brundtland Commission - 1987). Another popular definition with environmentalists is "development that does not deplete the 'natural capital' needed to sustain the environment in the future."

Achieving Sustainable Development

The BC Round Table on the Environment and the Economy has proposed the following set of principles for achieving sustainability:

- Limit our impact on the living world to stay within its carrying capacity (its ability to renew itself from natural and human impacts);
- Preserve and protect the environment;
- Hold to a minimum the depletion of non-renewable resources;
- Promote long-term economic development that increases the benefits from a given stock of resources without drawing down on our stocks of environmental assets (through diversifying and making resource use more efficient);
- Meet basic needs and aim for a fair distribution of the benefits and the costs of resource use and environmental protection;
- Provide a system of decision-making and governance that is designed to address sustainability (is more proactive, participatory, long term); and

- Promote values that support sustainability (through information and education).

Indicators

The BC Roundtable suggests the following indicators of environmental quality:

- Air Quality Index
- Drinking Water Quality
- Fecal Coliforms
- Dissolved Oxygen
- Per Capita Waste
- Noise Levels
- Species Diversity
- Green Space
- Natural Habitat

These indicators are not meant to be static measurements of environmental sustainability. More often than not the trend in the indicator is more important than the number itself. For example, the downward trend in local air pollutants is more important than the 1993 level itself.

Sustainable Development and Community Planning

In terms of community planning, the following kinds of policies should be considered as ways to work towards sustainable development:

- Establish energy-efficient land use patterns, e.g. basic shops and services within a 5 to 10 minute walk from home; opportunities to live and work in the same community or building;
- Create buildings and/or districts which are mostly self-sufficient and efficient re: power, sewage treatment, gray and runoff water, recycling and composting;

- Establish food production capacity through community gardens, roof gardens and small-scale commercial agriculture;
- Promote sustainable transportation by encouraging walking, biking and transit;
- Require use of environmentally "friendly" building materials in new construction, renovations, and landscaping;
- Establish energy efficiency design guidelines for buildings such as: thermal windows, heat pumps, wind turbines, natural air flow systems;
- Establish a healthy urban ecosystem network by: providing native plant and animal habitat; maximizing the urban forest to clean and cool air; daylighting streams; disconnecting downspouts; limiting impervious surfaces (less paving); reducing water consumption and use of pesticides and herbicides; and
- Ensure planning processes that are ecologically responsive by requiring mitigation of any ecological damage resulting from development.

City of Vancouver Definition and Principles

In 2002 City Council adopted a definition of sustainability and a set of principles which would be used to evaluate City programs and policies:

Definition: A sustainable Vancouver is a community that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is a place where people live, work, and prosper in a vibrant community of communities. In such a community,

sustainability is achieved through community participation and the reconciliation of short and long term economic, social, and ecological well-being.

Principles:

- Today's decisions must not compromise the choices of our children and future generations.
- We are all accountable for our individual and collective actions.
- Resources must be used fairly and efficiently without compromising the sustainability of one community for another.
- Using renewable resources is encouraged and supported, while the use of non-renewable resources should be minimized.
- Renewable resource consumption should not exceed the rate of regeneration.
- Strong collaboration and open communication between the public, the business sector, and all levels of government are important.
- We value cultural, economic, and environmental diversity.
- A community should provide a safe, healthy, and viable setting for human interaction, education, employment, recreation, and cultural development.
- A sustainable Vancouver contributes to, and provides leadership towards, regional, provincial, national, and global sustainability.

The Council report describing these principles also provides examples of City initiatives which enhance sustainability including:

- the Special Office of the Environment
- the Southeast False Creek Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood
- Land Use and Transportation

Planning (Central Area Plan, CityPlan, Industrial Land Strategy, and the Vancouver Transportation Plan)

- Affordable Housing
- Energy Efficiency and Civic Buildings
- Integrated Pest Management (Parks Board)
- Biofiltration (Lost Lagoon and Hastings Pond)
- Public Involvement Strategy and Civic Youth Strategy

The report also establishes a staff committee to coordinate sustainability assessments and prepare a City of Vancouver Sustainability Action Plan.

<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/sustainability/>

Vancouver's Food Security Initiatives

The food and agricultural system in Canada has changed dramatically over the past fifty years. The trend has been towards industrialization with emphasis on mechanical over natural, and capital-intensive rather than labour-intensive production, processing and distribution methods. The current food system is often oriented towards global trade rather than the satisfaction of local needs. A combination of hunger in Canadian society, loss of agricultural lands, limited economic viability of small and medium sized farms, lost economic opportunities, growing distance between producer and consumer, negative environmental impacts of an industrialized, long-distance food system (e.g. greater pollution and greenhouse gas emissions), and dissatisfaction with the current food system in general has propelled a range of community organizations and local governments to call for the creation of a more just and sustainable food system.

A just and sustainable food system is

defined as one in which food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular place.

On July 8, 2003, Council approved a motion supporting the development of a just and sustainable food system for the City of Vancouver that fosters equitable food production, distribution and consumption; nutrition; community development and environmental health.

Vancouver Food Security Initiatives and inventory could be viewed at <http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/com/msvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/foodpolicy/pdf/inventory.pdf>

Sources

City of Vancouver:

1995 State of the Environment Report
Draft Guidelines for Sustainable Development in the Central Area

April 2002 Council report: Creating a Sustainable City

2003 Food Policy, Social Planning