

Sustainable Development/Climate Change



Mount Pleasant

City of Vancouver
Community
planning program

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 is “development that does not deplete the ‘natural capital’ needed to sustain the environment in the future.”

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 the 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 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

Climate Protection Action Plans

The Cool Vancouver Taskforce was assembled by City Council to provide advice on a climate change action plan in March 2003.

Based on recommendations of the Taskforce, the City formed climate change goals. The goals became the Corporate Climate Change Action Plan (goals for City operations) and the Community Climate Change Action Plan (goals for community operations). The goals and action plans have been adopted by Council and are currently being implemented.

Corporate Goal

For City operations and facilities: To reduce green house gas emissions (GHG's) by 20% from 1990 levels by 2010.

Community Goal

For engaging residents: To reduce community green house gas emissions (GHG's) 6% from 1990 levels by 2012.

In June 2007, Council adopted targets to further reduce community GHG emissions to 33% below current levels by 2020 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050. In addition, Council adopted the target of having all new construction in Vancouver be GHG neutral by 2030.

For more information, visit: vancouver.ca/sustainability/

Green Buildings

Green Building Strategy

Green buildings are designed for less of an impact on the environment by utilizing fewer of the limited resources available on Earth. The City of Vancouver is developing a Green Building Strategy (GBS). The GBS is one of the many green building initiatives currently underway to reduce the environmental impacts of buildings and related infrastructure, others

include EcoDensity, EcoStructure, SEFC, and major rezonings. It proposes specific changes to by-laws and zoning regulations that set an environmental performance baseline to ensure relevant buildings achieve the equivalent of a LEEDTM Certified level of performance. The GBS will be implemented in phases. Contact David Ramsle at 604-873-7946 to find out more about GBS or visit vancouver.ca/sustainability.

Green Building Construction

A sustainable community is being built in Southeast False Creek (SEFC). It is a large scale green construction project unlike anything ever undertaken in Vancouver. Other places to see green buildings are at the University of British Columbia, the City's National Works Yard, B.C. Cancer Agency Research Centre plus upcoming expansions to the Vancouver Aquarium and the Vancouver Convention Centre.

Green Building Program

The City is in the process of developing a Green Homes Program, which is a suite of recommended changes to the Vancouver Building By-law for new homes. Through these recommendations new homeowners stand to save up to 30% on their energy bills, use less water, generate less GHGs, and have healthier places to live. To find out more about these recommendations and provide your thoughts, visit www.vancouver.ca/greenhomes.

EcoDensity

Building on the work of the CityPlan process that promotes the development of complete, mixed use urban communities in all the City's neighbourhoods, EcoDensity is a way to plan our growing city while reducing our ecological footprint. It is the City's vision for how Vancouver will grow in a way that is green, as well as livable and affordable.

EcoStructure

Amenities and services that support EcoDensity can be described as EcoStructure. EcoStructure includes more sustainable infrastructure for transportation, water, food, waste, and community services that make neighbourhoods more livable, such as parks, greenways, community centres, and daycares. Vancouver has a good start in implementing many amenities and services that exemplify EcoStructure. However, these efforts will need to intensify to complement EcoDensity.

Public consultation and special City Council meetings on EcoDensity are now completed. In June 2008, staff will report on results of public consultation and present to City Council a third draft of EcoDensity Charter and Initial Actions. To find out more about EcoDensity, visit www.vancouver.ca/ecodensity, email ecodensity@vancouver.ca or call 604-873-7707.

Vancouver's Food Security Initiatives

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.

For more information, visit City of Vancouver's food policy web pages at www.vancouver.ca/commsvcs/socialplanning/initiatives/foodpolicy

Sources:

- City of Vancouver:
- 1995 State of the Environment Report
- Guidelines for Sustainable Development in the Central Area
- April 2002 Council report: Creating a Sustainable City
- 2003 Food Policy, Social Planning
- vancouver.ca/sustainability