

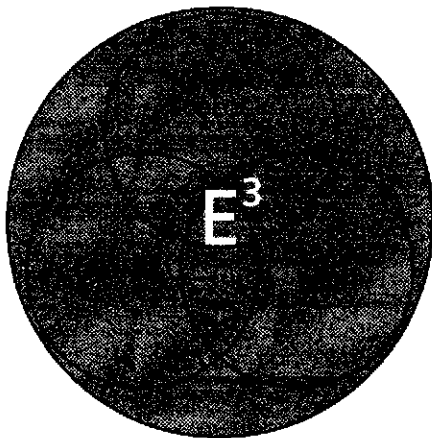
The City of Port Coquitlam's Sustainability Initiative

By Kim Fowler, MCIP

Sustainability requires not only the integration of economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects, but equally must consider small to large scale activities and the short to long-term periods. Through partnerships built with neighbourhood residents, local businesses, development community, interdepartmental staff and staff with Council, the City of Port Coquitlam is implementing a sustainable legacy for the community.

A vibrant community of over 57,000 located in Greater Vancouver's northeast sector, the City of Port Coquitlam boasts a picturesque natural setting, a strategic location, progressive business opportunities and small town spirit. As with many BC urban municipalities in recent years, the City has been bustling with new commercial, institutional, industrial and residential development, much of it in our historical and authentic downtown core and the Dominion Triangle commercial/industrial area. The City's challenge is making sustainable or 'smart' decisions on this growth.

The City of Port Coquitlam embarked on a Sustainability Initiative in 2005 through the Development Services Department for development activities. Sustainability requires not only the integration of economic, socio-cultural and environmental aspects, but equally must consider small to large scale activities and the short to long-term periods. This is the true E3 community integration, shown right, which is the intended outcome of the Initiative.



E3 Integration = Sustainable Community Legacy

In 2002, Port Coquitlam created a Strategic Plan for the organization to establish the long-term direction and guide the City in its planning and decision-making. The Strategic Plan provides the corporate overall framework under which all activities are integrated, aligned and regularly reported. The vision, which was endorsed again by the community in the 2005 Official Community Plan, is:

Port Coquitlam will aspire to be a complete community, unique because of its small town atmosphere, its strong sense of pride and where:

- Citizens have a collective sense of belonging, and contribute to the quality of life in the community
- The community celebrates a vibrant culture and heritage
- The environment is nurtured for present and future generations
- A dynamic economy contributes to prosperity and the opportunity to work close to home
- Planned development strengthens the character of the community, helping to create safe and affordable neighbourhoods

The major components of the Sustainability Initiative are:

1. Official Community Plan (OCP) – Adopted in June 2005, Port Coquitlam's new OCP was developed through a two-year comprehensive community consultative process guided by the "PocoPlan Task Group" comprised of local citizens

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who directed the review process and made recommendations to Council. Port Coquitlam's future growth management will be more sustainable and "smart" by incorporating best management practices, such as New Urbanism and significant densification and revitalization of commercial core and neighbourhood revitalization areas over sprawl.

2. Sustainability Checklist – The City is the first municipality in North America to introduce a Triple Bottom Line Sustainability Checklist¹ to be used as an essential tool in the discussion and consideration of all significant land development applications. The Checklist provides a comprehensive assessment of a proposal's contribution to sustainability by balanced scoring of environmental, economic and socio-cultural criteria (1/3 each), which is called Triple Bottom Line assessment. By providing sustainability criteria at the earliest development stage, the City enables developers and their consultants to consider the project's sustainability. The criteria are broad and multi-faceted to provide flexibility for site customization and encourage innovation. The highest weighting is given to green building technology due to its significance to our community and comprehensive system (e.g. LEED has 70 possible points). If high scores are obtained, the application will be fast-tracked through the rezoning and development permit approval process. While the Checklist describes an ideal, it is highly unlikely that any one project will earn maximum points in all sections and no pass/fail standard has been set. A transition to more sustainable building and site construction is expected over time.
3. Financial Management – Annually, each City department prepares a business plan outlining proposed work program priorities, significant issues and trends, and financial summary. The work program priorities are cross-referenced to the Strategic Plan objectives to ensure consistency with, and implementation of, the higher level corporate plan. A quarterly variance report is provided to Council, which requires the same cross referencing and identification of any budget or work program variances. Annual budget decision packages, submitted by departments (including police), are ranked using a triple bottom line, strategic plan alignment and risk assessment matrix.
4. Potable Water Source Control Program – The City's potable water supply and fish-bearing streams are protected from being contaminated by non-potable fluids through backflow prevention devices, grease traps for food establishments and oil interceptors in parking lots. Prior to adoption of the program this summer, Port Coquitlam taxpayers were paying at least \$800,000 per year to remove grease from local sewer lines.
5. Green Building Technology for Municipal Buildings – A new community building complex, the Leigh Square Community Arts Village, is being constructed adjacent to City Hall. The two buildings will meet the LEED Silver certification requirements through re-use of an old post office building, passive solar design, in-floor radiant heating and cooling, low velocity fresh air distribution systems and high-efficiency light fixtures. The Arts Village will integrate space for artisan work, display, sales and teaching with a community gathering place – the first of its kind in North America. The City's main recreation facility (including a pool, gymnasium and multi-purpose rooms) underwent an energy retrofit replacing conventional building technology with solar panels, heat recovery pumps and mid-efficiency boilers resulting in a 33.9% reduction in natural gas consumption for 2004 and 44% in 2005. Air quality was improved with a 460 kg reduction in nitrogen oxide emissions and a 96,360 kg/year reduction in carbon dioxide. Projected energy cost savings are estimated at a 30% reduction in energy consumption, \$22,000/year reduction in operating costs, and \$4,000/year solar heating system savings.
6. Green Roof Regulation – New large-format buildings over 5,000 sq.m. (53,821 sq.ft.) will be required to construct green roofs through a Zoning bylaw amendment under Council consideration. Benefits the City expects to derive from this initiative include: intercepting and reducing storm water run-off; improving building thermal performance and energy consumption; reducing the urban heat island effect, and; enhanced views where dwelling units or offices overlook the roofs.
7. Green Building and Social Housing Incentive Policy and Social Housing Fund – Developers who provide green building technology and social housing are encouraged through application fast tracking and consideration of bonus density through the rezoning process. The City has established a social housing fund through a bonus density cash dedication from a recent townhouse development. The social housing fund will be used for further develop partnerships with the private and non-profit housing providers.
8. Social Planning Review – The City initiated a social planning study to establish a current inventory of social services and housing, identify any gaps and provide recommendations for future social planning priorities.
9. Cash-in-Lieu of Parking Variance – Parking is usually the highest cost and the most significant site constraint for local developers. The public, however, continues to demand more parking convenience. Last year, the City adopted an as-of-right parking variance for commercial and residential developments in the downtown wherein

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developers may elect to pay \$15,000 per parking space to a maximum of 10% of the total number otherwise required. The funds may be used by the City to improve its current parking service, such as redesigning existing lots, new signage & education pamphlets, and to partner with revitalization proposals for higher density developments providing public parking.

10. Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Matrix in City Land Sales – The City prides itself on having no corporate borrowing debt and is embarking on a \$98.5 million bridge overpass project next year. To generate revenue from surplus land to fund capital projects, approximately 20 municipally-owned

sites will be marketed over the next 5-7 years for a variety of purposes. Best development practices will be showcased, including green building technology and social housing. The TBL matrix, customized for each site, will be used to assess proposals and select the successful proponent. Proposals containing development best practices targeted for each site will receive higher point totals in the TBL matrix than proposals which do not include those best practices. The first site being marketed is a 2-acre townhouse site being required to build to the Built Green™ silver standard and provide public art, a variety of housing sizes and prices and traffic demand management.

In summary, the Sustainability Initiative has integrated the critical elements of

sustainability; short to long-term, and; incremental to strategic. Through partnerships built with neighbourhood residents, local businesses, development community, interdepartmental staff and staff with Council, the City is implementing a sustainable legacy for our community. We note this is being done during the highest development activity experienced by the municipality, escalating construction costs, worsening labour force shortages and increasing regional traffic congestion. While it would be easy to be consumed by the 'tyranny of the urgent and unimportant', Port Coquitlam, a medium-sized urban municipality, has instead chosen to identify our legacy with our community, and work to achieve it together. 

¹ Planners wishing to obtain a copy of the Checklist will find it posted on the Port Coquitlam website at www.portcoquitlam.ca

PIBC 2007 Budget Highlights

As part of its meeting of November 24th, 2006 PIBC Council held a morning budget workshop to address the 2007 operating budget for the Institute. Council took the opportunity to accommodate ongoing growth and development of the Institute's operations, as well as identify budget allocations for key priority areas for the coming year in accordance with Council's strategic planning.

Highlights of the 2007 Budget Include:

- Increased Revenues from Non-Membership Services, including advertising
- Increased Revenues from Membership Fees due to growing membership, and a very modest increase Membership Fee rates
- An additional \$30,000 for Professional Development / Chapter Events and Projects
- Increased funding for PIBC Conference Student attendance

Significant funding for a major reconstruction and enhancement of the PIBC Website

Council was pleased that the current (2006) fiscal year was closing with a continuing strong financial position, likely to add to the Institute's accumulated equity and financial reserves. Council also determined that the 2007 Budget provided the opportunity to re-invest in the key priorities identified over the past year and a half – including member professional development opportunities, support for students, and enhanced communications resources.

Green Roofs: Chapter Two

by Laura Lee Richard, MCIP (your editor's other role is the Manager of Planning, City of Port Coquitlam).

UPDATE – On December 11, 2006, the City of Port Coquitlam adopted a bylaw requiring green roofs (vegetated roofing systems) for any new building with a footprint of over 5,000 sq.m. Effective immediately.

Port Coquitlam, a community with a number of vacant sites designated for big box retail stores and large industrial developments, may have adopted the first Green Roof bylaw in Canada to apply to all large-format buildings. Now, when developments consuming extensive land areas are developed, at a minimum large buildings will have roofs providing homes for birds and contributing to biodiversity, their urban heat island effect will be reduced slowing the rate of global warming, their use of non-renewable energy resources will be substantially reduced, and the amount of storm water directly going into storm sewers will be lessened.

A small step? Yes. An important one? As we become more aware of global warming issues, most certainly yes. The purpose of this update is to let you know: it can be done and your community can "Just Do It!" too.

The key contributing factors:

- **"Chapter One":** The article published in the September 2006 Planning West issue by Bill Buholzer, MCIP and Robyn Wark, MCIP Regulatory Options for Promoting Green Roofs in British Columbia. This article gave us a blueprint and confidence that adopting a green roof bylaw could be simple and within municipal powers.
- **Sustainability Context:** Port Coquitlam's comprehensive and realistic approach to sustainability initiatives. The green roof bylaw is just one of many initiatives being pursued by the City to promote and achieve sustainable development, as described in the article published in this

issue by the City's Director of Development Services, Kim Fowler, MCIP. Having appropriate policy is essential to provide the decision-making framework; having appropriate legislation was deemed necessary, for this situation, to achieve results. Much as we would prefer to just use "carrots" (bonus density, financial incentives), there are times when "sticks" are needed too.

- **Support:** We had to develop sufficient expertise, essentially overnight, on the topic to respond to substantial public interest and industry concerns. We were helped by the excellent technical research, accurate information and outreach provided by BCIT Centre for the Advancement of Green Roof Technology (Maureen Connelly and Anita Green, MCIP). With a Planning Division staff of only five contending with a myriad of urban growth issues, devoting considerable time to research, analyze, educate, and evaluate is a luxury we do not enjoy – but it keeps us efficient.
- **Leadership:** A City Council willing to assume a leadership role with its Director of Development Services leading the way. Although nobody appeared to speak against the bylaw at the Public Hearing, written submissions expressing opposition from members of the development community and the Urban Development Institute were received. Their concerns - higher costs, unproven track record, lack of industry expertise / materials, liability, insurance, and timing – were acknowledged but not seen as insurmountable. In the end, sustainability won out over building costs and uncertainty. 🏡