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Royal Roads University

## **Integrated Community Sustainability Planning: Best Practices**

June 20, 2000

Moderated by Ann Dale

### **Participants**

**Dr. Ann Dale**, Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Community Development, Royal Roads University

**Dominica Babicki**, Supervisor, Sustainability Research for the District of North Vancouver

**Isabel Budke**, Smart Planning Manager with the Fraser Basin Council

**Kim Graham**, Program Manager, City of Saint John

**Dr. Chris Ling**, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Community Development, Royal Roads University

**Dr. Nola-Kate Seymoar**, President and CEO with the Sustainable Cities Foundation

### **Dialogue**

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#### **Ann Dale**

Welcome, colleagues, to our discussion today on integrated sustainability community planning, something that is even more imperative, given climate change and the rising fuel costs. Clear, we are going to have to innovate in diverse ways, and communities will be at the forefront. Could each of you please introduce yourself and why you are interested in this critical public policy issue?

#### **Kim Graham**

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Hi Ann, my name is Kim Graham and I work for the City of Saint John located in New Brunswick.

My interest in integrated sustainability planning is related to my desire to move our city forward through the Vision 2015 project. Developing an ICSP is one component of a broader framework we have adopted to change how we operate in response to community needs and to improve our accountability and transparency.

We are using a long-term, integrated, planning framework to translate vision into

action. The framework recognizes that the City of Saint John, like all municipalities, is a complex system, and it addresses environmental, economic, social, governance, and infrastructure needs.

The project is using an integrated approach of planning, strategy, action, and performance measurement to align City services to the vision, goals and objectives identified by the citizens of Saint John.

### **Chris Ling**

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Hi my name is Chris Ling. I am a post-doctoral scholar at Royal Roads University, I have a background in Landscape Planning and Sustainable Community Development - with particularly emphasis on the interdisciplinary aspects between and within these topics. One of my current areas of research is the ICSP process - particularly how they incorporate participatory planning and long-term visioning especially in small communities

### **Nina Gales**

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Hello Everyone, I am Nina Gales, Manager of Corporate Affairs for the Town of Olds, AB which is located 3 km west of the QE II in the Calgary-Edmonton corridor. Here in Olds we have spent the last year participating in an Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP) pilot initiative lead by the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA). In addition Olds has also been a Natural Step pilot community over the last year. The AUMA has developed a comprehensive sustainability planning guide that moves municipalities and their community through the process of creating an ICSP. Olds committed to following the guide for the creation of our ICSP which is titled the Olds Strategic Sustainability Plan (OSSP) [www.olds.ca/sustain.html](http://www.olds.ca/sustain.html) The OSSP was adopted by Council in February 2008. My role in the process was and continues to be one of advisory capacity to Council, Staff, and the community; integrating the needs of the community with those of the Town of Olds as a corporate entity remains a challenge.

### **Ann Dale**

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Welcome, Nina, Chris and Kim, don't hesitate to add website addresses and any documents you wish to the points you want to make during this dialogue.

While we wait for Dominica Babicki, Nina and Kim, what community engagement processes have you used in your plan development?

## **Isabel Budke**

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Good morning, everyone, Isabel Budke here. I have a strong interest in the application of different sustainability planning frameworks and approaches in different communities--small, large, remote, rural, urban, Aboriginal. I have worked with the International Centre for Sustainable Cities (ICSC) on developing planning frameworks and coordinated their small and Aboriginal communities initiative. Specifically, I worked with the city of Iqaluit on Baffin Island last year in setting the stage for a long-term sustainability planning process. I, too, am very interested in how to effectively engage the public in sustainability planning.

I am currently working with the Fraser Basin Council on rolling out the "Smart Planning for Communities" initiative in British Columbia--an initiative designed to support local and First Nations governments in their sustainability planning efforts.

I look forward to our dialogue and learning more about everyone's important work!

## **Ann Dale**

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Welcome, Isabel, we have a lot of expertise of people working on the ground, let's try and share as much as we can about what is working and what is not working. Our first question, What have been the major challenges implementing a long-term plan? And how did you overcome them?

## **DBabicki**

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Good morning everyone - my name is Dominica Babicki and I work in Sustainability Planning at the District of North Vancouver. This topic is particularly pertinent for me and all of us at the District because we are just about to revise our very outdated Official Community Plan - and partly because of FCM's funding scheme we have decided to make our OCP into a Community Sustainability Plan.

## **Ann Dale**

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Welcome, Dominica, I am very glad to hear that you are integrating your OCP and the ICSP, I have heard of a number of communities that for some reason or

other, are not integrating the two, which makes me leary of any implementation. There are too many plans and strategies in all communities gathering dust on shelves.

## **Nola Kate**

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Hi I am Nola Kate Seymoar, President and CEO of the International Centre for Sustainable Cities headquartered in Vancouver. ICSC was one of the four partners that created CitiesPLUS and in 2003 we won the top award in the IGU competition for 100 year plans for an existing city. Since then we have created and serve as the Secretariat for a peer learning network of more than 30 cities doing very long-term integrated planning and also fast action demonstration projects.

My interest in this topic is because the CitiesPLUS experience transformed us - as an organization we realized that changing the timeframe changed everything. Also we then began learning about other frameworks for long-term planning. In 2004 we published a paper about 8 of the frameworks that were then in use around the world. Since then we have reviewed a number of others. The Sustainable Cities: PLUS Network has grown into what I consider one of the most useful networks building intellectual and social capital about sustainability - and incidentally, about long-term planning.

I am not in Vancouver at the moment and am a little technologically challenged so if I don't respond in real time please bear with me - I will try and catch up over the next few hours.

From my perspective - the challenges in "implementing the long term plan" actually starts at the first step - deciding what the scope of the planning process will include - ie do we include the whole region? (eco-region), do we include all four sectors? how do we engage the public?, what timeframe do we use? etc. In my learning - if the timeframe is not 30 to 50 years - which requires cities to look beyond their current trends and do backcasting - the exercise is basically irrelevant. The exception is if the city uses TNS (The Natural Step) or QUEST (A computer game approach) which require backcasting. Our first learning with citiesPLUS was not to refer to it as a 100 year "plan". It is a 100 year vision, and a 30 year strategy. A "plan" has a work-plan and a budget. so - back again later. NK

## **Kim Graham**

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In response to Ann's question about public engagement - The City of Saint John carried out an eleven month public engagement lead by a Vision 2015 Citizens Advisory Group.

The Citizens Advisory Group was asked to accomplish three objectives. The first

was to develop a community vision by consulting with the public. The second was to identify goals Saint Johners can all work towards to achieve this vision, and the third objective was to develop a set of sustainability principles for Saint John.

The public engagement process was a tremendous success. The Citizens Advisory Group received feedback from approximately 4.2% of the community, translating into well over fifteen thousand ideas on the future for Saint John. This information became the basis for a community owned and developed vision statement and goals to describe our Saint John of the future. With the support of the Saint John Environment Committee, sustainability principles were developed.

### **Nina Gales**

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The public engagement process used in Olds included seven full day sessions that had a total of over 200 people attend (which for a town of 7200 is many). Each session was based on generational clusters. For the first session we had 45 high school students and the last session we had 30 seniors. The big group was divided into 15 smaller groups one for each of the 15 strategy areas outlined in the AUMA guide book (example strategy area Water, Transportation and Energy). Each session started with an education piece that explained the basis for sustainability in Olds, then we did visioning by drawing pictures, went through a current reality analysis for each of the strategy areas and followed up with identifying gaps. The process was very successful in both getting detailed information and building knowledge capacity in the participants.

Nina

### **DBabicki**

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To respond to your first question Ann - our first challenge is trying to integrate sustainability into the OCP. The OCP process is long and in itself required an integrative process but adding sustainability in the front and centre creates some anxiety among municipal staff. On the other hand many of us have a very strong argument that you need to combine sustainability planning with the OCP because the OCP is the principal planning engine of municipalities.

### **Ann Dale**

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It seems to me that a dynamic interactive public engagement process affects commitment to implementation. Chris and Isabel, what do you think?

## **Chris Ling**

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I entirely agree - if a community can claim some sort of ownership over the plan then they are far more likely to maintain interest and hold municipalities to account - I suspect this is the only way implementation will be achieved - if there is no local ownership then the priority the document has will slip.

Nina, I have two questions - firstly is did you use any published technique to facilitate or manage your meetings (and did you employ professional facilitators?).

Second - what are your views on the AUMA guidance - do you find the strategy areas appropriate for Olds - or would you have chosen different ones if given more flexibility?

## **Nina Gales**

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Working within the traditional silos and hierarchical structure of municipal government has made the integration or holistic approach inherent in sustainability planning a challenge. Council has recently developed a Strategic Plan based completely from the OSSP and I am hopeful that this will be the beginning of moving forward to the development of a structure that is integrated in nature. The concept of using transitional teams to move sustainability forward is a next step for us.

## **Ann Dale**

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Nina, can you elaborate more on what you are doing with transitional teams?

## **Nina Gales**

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Ann, the concept of transitional teams is successfully outlined in the book "Leading Change Toward Sustainability: A Change Management Guide for Business, Government and Civil Society" by Bob Doppelt. The idea is that teams are created to work on project specific tasks and are made up of staff from all departments and levels in the organization. Each team will also have one of the members of staff that is excelling in the implementation of sustainability thinking. The intended result is that the outcomes of the task group will be integrated with all the parts of the organization.

**Ann Dale**

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Dear to my heart, in my world, we call this inter and trans-disciplinary research or cross-departmental committees. They also have two other discounted purposes, the building of social capital around the changes necessary and crossing the silos and stovepipes. As well, the team always outperforms the individual, no matter how brilliant the individual.

**Chris Ling**

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Hi Nina, is there any resistance to this approach within the organisation? I would imagine it draws quite a few people out of their 'comfort zones'?

**Nina Gales**

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Yes Chris, we have some folks out of their comfort zone ... it is something we are moving ahead with caution. I am lucky to have a leader that understands that outside of comfort zones is where progress is made!

**Chris Ling**

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Hi Kim, I am curious about the choice of timeline - I assume from the title of the project your vision was for 2015. What was the rationale for this choice of timeline - and why did you think it the best option for engaging the community on sustainability?

**Kim Graham**

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Chris, the name of our project, Vision 2015 refers to the timeframe in which we will see change.

Our framework timelines are as noted.

Community Vision 75 - 100 years  
Community Goals 20 - 30 years  
ICSP 20 -30 years

Council Priorities/Policies 4 year cycle with annual review  
Corporate Strategic Plan 4 year cycle with annual review  
Service Delivery Plans 4 year cycle with annual review

## **Ann Dale**

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Our research has shown that the communities that appear to be on a more sustainable pathway have a plan that is at least 100 years out, and in some ways, it may also allow for more integration of ecological, social and economic imperatives with such a long planning horizon.

## **Nina Gales**

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Chris, in response to your questions:

1) Yes we used the Natural Step and the addition of the 5 dimensions (social, economy, governance, environment and culture) of sustainability outlined in the AUMA guide. as the basis for our process. All participants were briefly introduced to the Natural Step framework and were asked to develop a vision that helped us move in this direction. Yes we used a professional facilitator (one versed in strategic planning).

2) I feel the AUMA guidance has built in flexibility and feel confident that they have done a significant amount of research to get to this point. In my opinion the guidebook is a must read for any community moving forward with an ICSP.

## **Isabel Budke**

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It is encouraging to see that an increasing number of municipal and Aboriginal governments are recognizing that an interactive and meaningful public engagement process is key for both developing and implementing a sustainability plan or planning process. However, this is also one of the most challenging and time-consuming aspects of sustainability planning, and sometimes there is a disconnect between the political leadership and the community.

For example, in Iqaluit, I found that citizens in general were ready and eager to be engaged in developing a long-term vision and plan for a more sustainable city, while part of city council was not entirely convinced that this was a worthwhile process. With patience, enthusiasm, engaged staff and community champions I think it is possible to bridge that gap and create a process and results that are

enriching for both the citizens and the political leadership of communities.

### **Nina Gales**

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I agree this is very exciting to hear!!

### **Ann Dale**

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It appears that community engagement, although key to implementation, has its difficulties, in your experience, what has worked and what has not worked, and what would you recommend to other communities?

### **Kim Graham**

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First, we actively engaged the public. We went to events, had community bbq's, ran contests, had workshops, and collaborated with groups to get on the agenda at meetings. The more passive techniques – like using a web survey provided less response.

Secondly, involvement of the youth of our community was key to our success. We had 100 % participation from middle and high schools in the area to our survey, ran a Facebook page, and had representation from youth on our advisory committee.

We also constantly monitored our progress to check what was and what was not working. We made course correction to our engagement and communication strategies throughout the consultation.

One of the challenges we faced in Saint John was how we would prevent our planning effort from becoming a document that sits on a shelf and gathers dust.

We addressed this challenge a number of ways.

First, we made sure we had a framework in place before we started to engage the public. One of the first questions we had from a member of our Citizens group was how could they be sure that the time and effort they were committing to the visioning and planning process would make a difference. Having a framework to take the community vision down to service level - in advance of

consultation was an advantage. We knew how we would use the information from the public during each step of the process and were prepared to answer that question.

## **Nina Gales**

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What has worked for us in Olds is our commitment to the Natural Step sustainability principles and other concepts for creating a common understanding and language for sustainability decision making. It is much easier to have useful debate when you are discussing the way to get to an agreed upon point rather than all trying to go in different directions.

## **DBabicki**

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Since we are just beginning our Sustainability Planning/OCP process, I wanted to briefly describe the consultation process we are using and to see if you know any other communities which have gone this way.

A couple of months ago we struck the Community Planning Working Group (CPWG) - its a group of 30 citizens from all walks of life who have agreed to spend the next year developing the consultation process that should be used in updating the OCP - in other words we are involving the public at one step back than usual - I think its a good example of collaborative planning. The last two meetings of the CPWG have been very interesting and in fact the group has unanimously decided to change the process we had proposed to develop the consultation process for the OCP. Your comments and input about a such a process are welcome!

## **Chris Ling**

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Hi Dominica, personally I think there is no point that is too early - indeed what is really needed is the development of a real working relationship between the municipality and the community over a number of project over time, this serves to significantly reduce transaction costs for each new project as the relationships and trust are already in place. This is in fact (through necessity) what is happening in the community I described in a previous post. The one danger is that that committee becomes seen as part of the municipality - rather than part of the community - if they fail to maintain a connection and transparency (if you are

familiar with the Ladder of Participation there is a small step of the top of the ladder (empowerment) that takes you right back to the bottom where an elite controls the decision making).

## **Ann Dale**

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In the actual development of your plan, what have been your lessons, and I would especially ask you to talk about how you achieved integration of what I call the three imperatives--ecological, social and economic, if you did? And what about integrated decision-making?

## **Chris Ling**

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In one small community I am currently working in there is a municipal staff of 1. Clearly a transitional team approach here wouldn't work. Three is another problem - one of capacity. The community has engaged a volunteer committee from the community to help write the ICSP (and they have recently completed a draft OCP in this way). However they volunteer nature of the committee does hamper the ability of the team to think holistically as the discussion are always around people's pet topics.

What do you think the solutions maybe in a case like this?

## **DBabicki**

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In response to your question Chris - I believe that the community you are speaking of with so little capacity should really have only one plan - the OCP should be revised to include all the required sustainability aspects. Also being involved with a peer exchange/ learning network like the PLUS network would be a great way to increase its capacity.

## **Nina Gales**

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Another area that we have tried to work through is in developing new ways of engaging the community. Our hope is that we can provide a way for groups and individuals to participate in a meaningful way in their governance. We have created what we call a Partnership Action Plan Agreement. The idea is that at the end of each year we have new agreements and that we have broadened awareness about sustainability and have increased overall commitment to

creating a place that is desired and meeting the needs of all our citizens.

## **Ann Dale**

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Isabel, could you please give us some more information about the B.C. Smart Planning initiative and how do communities go about accessing funds?

## **Isabel Budke**

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Smart Planning for Communities (SPC) is a BC-wide collaborative initiative providing resources and tools to local and First Nations governments for planning socially, culturally, economically and environmentally sustainable communities.

SPC provides advice and support to communities (both municipalities and First Nations) that are interested in getting engaged in or enhancing their sustainability planning. SPC will, by and large, take on the role of a facilitator/ catalyst/ capacity builder/ connector for and among communities across BC. It will entail a network of Sustainability Facilitators, working directly with communities interested in sustainability planning, and a Resource Network of communities and experts from the field for the purpose of information sharing and support.

We are currently in the process of rolling out the first phase of the initiative and anticipate to have three or more “Sustainability Facilitators” available over the next couple of months to work with interested communities (we anticipate the number of Sustainability Facilitators to increase to ten over the next couple of years).

While SPC does not provide direct funding, our Facilitators can help communities access funding for sustainability planning and related projects from a variety of sources. Main funding pots for sustainability planning in BC are the Gas Tax Funds, administered through UBCM, the Green Municipal Funds allocated through FCM (Federation of Canadian Municipalities) and various initiatives of the provincial government.

We have information on these as well as related links and tools on the FBC website under “Smart Planning for Communities”:  
[http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/programs/smart\\_planning.html](http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/programs/smart_planning.html). My colleague Maureen LeBourdais and I would be pleased to answer any questions or receive comments on the Smart Planning for Communities initiative.

## **DBabicki**

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At a recent visioning session for all three municipalities on the North Shore of Vancouver, I had one of those "ah ha" moments. Its probably not an earth shattering fact for anyone but it made me look at things a little differently - and Ann this is in response to your question.

We on the most part are very lucky in Canada and many of us live in very livable community - but livability and sustainability are not synonymous. How therefore do you convince residents of your municipality that they need to change when on the most part they are happy? Who wants to change when they are happy? The answer is to look at the long term vision and to make people realize that in order to stay happy they have to move toward sustainability - they have to change. Some believe in shock therapy - show what happens if we don't change and others believe we have to show what a positive future looks like and backcast to get there. So to answer you question Ann - long term planning is the only way we incorporate sustainability into the livability of our communities.

## **Kim Graham**

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Our sustainability principles are a modified version of the Melbourne Principles. We adopted them early in our process and used them as guardrails to ensure our community vision and goals looked at not only the environment, economy, and social aspects of the community but also the governance and infrastructure needs of Saint John.

Our approach to developing the ICSP action plan is a whole systems approach and we are in the process of developing a decision making framework based o the sustainability principles.

## **Nina Gales**

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Chris, one concept that worked for our Olds Advisory Group for Sustainable Living. We used the five dimensions of sustainability to bring together individuals from the community active in each of the 5 dimensions. We laid a ground rule that participation in the group requires us to always recognize that creating a deficit in any one of the five dimensions decreases that ability for the other dimensions to thrive. This helps to have discussion about the interrelationships of

differing wants and needs.

### **Nina Gales**

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Kim this is very much the same as our process. It has been quite successful for us. Those that participate either work for the greater good of the community or they have an understanding of why they did not get their way. Those that are in disagreement usually feel they had the opportunity to participate and are at least satisfied some what by the opportunity. An example of this is that our local representative from the Tax Payer Association participated in our public engagement. By the end of the day he had many disagreements about details but was satisfied that sufficient planning for the future was occurring and that the public purse was in responsible hands. He has been nowhere to be found since.

### **DBabicki**

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Hi Chris, in response to your comment - I totally agree and we saw the issue in action. At our last CPWG meeting a few days ago, the group itself stated that they felt uncomfortable going forward and making decision about the community consultation process without engaging the rest of the community in this process. They themselves stated that if they didn't engage the community as soon as possible they would soon be accused of being of being some kind of secret organization trying to influence the municipality or the group is somehow been co-opted politically. So we are now looking on how to involve the community in helping develop the community consultation process!

### **Chris Ling**

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Ha ha - well that is extremely encouraging self awareness I would say.

### **Ann Dale**

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I hate to interject in a very stimulating conversation, but in your discussion, could you please respond to the following very interesting question from one of our listeners, How is urban biodiversity currently being considered in integrated planning?

## **Nina Gales**

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In Olds, this question of urban biodiversity falls into a number of the 15 strategy areas of our plan. Natural Areas and Built Environment primarily. We have set some very ambitious definitions of success or visions for the future and are in the process of making our action move towards the definition of success. The reality is that all we can hope for is that every chess move we make is in the direction of that definition of success. Time will be the determinant of our success.

## **Chris Ling**

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If for example a community is using the Melbourne Principles like St Johns then urban biodiversity will be a corner stone of the plan - and most other guidance considers urban biodiversity a very important component.

## **Nina Gales**

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Yes Chris, this is also true of the Natural Step principles. Decision making with principles in mind keeps everything on track.

## **Kim Graham**

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The people of Saint John's connection to our natural environment – waterways, parks, open spaces, were clearly articulated through the public consultation. Preserving and enhancing urban biodiversity has also been an area of focus for the municipality.

In developing our ICSP, we are reviewing the Cities existing plans and strategies that relate to economic, environmental, social, infrastructure and governance needs. We will identify and make recommendations with regards to gaps in the existing plans as they relate to the Community Vision and Goals. The vision and goals highlight the importance of our natural surroundings.

## **Ann Dale**

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We have a very interesting e-audience dialogue going on simultaneously. An idea from Gwendolyn from Montpelier, their envision Montpelier plan has just completed its vision and goals and has invited the city of Olympia, Washington to see which of them can be the first sustainable capital city. This seems to me like a perfect project for the Cities Plus Network, led by the Dr. Nola-Kate Seymoar, starting first in Canada and then viralling around the world.

## **Nina Gales**

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Lessons learned in Olds have been that public engagement takes time and people need to have the opportunity to gain knowledge and take the time to reflect on what they have learned. Systems thinking is inherently complex and patience is required to build capacity in our staff, elected officials and citizens.

## **DBabicki**

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Hi Nina, I agree but how to you reconcile the imperative for action. There is some frustration from both staff and politicians alike that while it is important to spend time engaging the public, it often makes taking action difficult - in other words a tension develops within a municipality where some want to rezone, increase density - basically get on with trying to build a more sustainable community - and others (usually planners) are saying we need to hold off until we consult, finish our planning process and in our case we are looking at a 2.5 to 3 year process to update our OCP. Any good ideas on how to balance these two imperatives?

## **Nina Gales**

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Another lesson learned in Olds to date is that what we are trying to do with moving towards sustainability is change social behaviour. This also takes time and patience. Sustainable Behaviour will only be realized if we push the boundaries of the social norms we are socialized to conform to. Through the combination of planned strategies that ask for commitment to new behaviour, piloting new ways of doing things and as a last result legislation that is first permissive of innovation and second ensures strict consequences for non-compliance we can develop sustainable behaviour.

## **Ann Dale**

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Two frameworks have been mentioned during our conversation--The Natural Step and the Melbourne Principles. I would like to refer all communities to two documents which used in tandem provide all the information they need to develop an ICSP and implement them, one is our planning template, which can be found at [www.crcresearch.org](http://www.crcresearch.org), under community tools, and the other is the planning guide developed by ICSC. We developed our planning template specifically because there are a number of different frameworks out there and it hyperlinks to a large diversity of them, tools and we advise communities to examine them, and chose the best and uniquely adapt them to their particular community and its needs through the development of a community engagement process. As well, in the template, which provides guidance on both the engagement and the plan, we talk about the necessity to embed the plan against current zoning, standards and bylaws and aim for policy alignment and policy congruence.

## **Ann Dale**

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Thank you, I have been reminded by my audience that the AUMA guide has also been referenced, Nina, perhaps you can provide more information? As well, from our audience, another framework, EarthCAT, [www.earthcat.org](http://www.earthcat.org).

## **Nina Gales**

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The AUMA has a comprehensive website jam packed with resources: [www.msp.auma.ca](http://www.msp.auma.ca)

## **Ann Dale**

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I cannot believe we only have a half hour left. Pretend that I am the Prime Minister of Canada, I don't really believe in climate change, so you have one paragraph to convince me about what elements of a long-term plan should be

applied to cities in Canada, and how is it going to benefit my government?

## **Nina Gales**

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Moving forward with action is a challenge ... and there are risks involved. In my opinion the best way is to do both acting and consulting at the same time. We (those of us on the ground in municipalities) generally have a grasp on the limit we can push the public to conform to sustainability. When it comes to public consultation that is legislated by the provincial authority then we must do our due diligence to follow the rules. One of the ways we have worked through this in Olds is to help build the capacity of the citizens to converse with Council in the public Council meeting. We have helped the citizens in our community with the leverage point of influence be prepared to talk about the holistic aspect of sustainability planning in a combination of delegation/report format. When the information is coming from the community rather than municipal staff Council has more reason to make decisions that allow administration act.

## **Kim Graham**

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The City of Saint John is in the process of switching to a decision-making model with a Council-Policy Committee structure. In this form of governance, Council will establish a limited number of standing committees that are responsible for developing, reviewing and interpreting policy and evaluating the performance of those policies once they have been implemented.

Each Standing Policy Committee (SPC) recommends policy to Council, who in turn makes the final decision. These policies will be developed based on actions and strategies identified in the ICSP and they will guide Council's decision-making in translating the Community's vision into a reality.

Council's role as a decision-making body is to focus on policy matters and setting the strategic direction that will guide the Administration and the community in the achievement of its vision and related goals. It is Council's responsibility to identify its priorities for the community based on the vision and goals developed by the community.

In addition to providing leadership in developing and recommending strategic outcomes to Council that will contribute to the achievement of desired changes in the community, Standing Committees are also the access point for citizens - a forum to raise matters of concern in the community. Council and committees use this input from the public in their decision-making, more specifically, in the development of policy required to address the needs of the community and make

the vision a reality.

## **Chris Ling**

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A successful Canada is reliant on successful communities. A successful community is one that looks forward and plans pro-actively for a shared vision, not one that plans reactively in the face of external and internal change and crisis. Integrated Sustainability Planning is one of the best opportunities communities have for putting these processes in place.

## **Nina Gales**

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Chris, we absolutely have the greatest opportunity to develop ICSP's. The time has never been more right to dream of such accomplishments. I believe that we have the power to determine our future.

I agree that long term planning is part of the solution. I would add that to truly reach a sustainable society a culture of continuous improvement must be reached. This requires continuous renewal of long term plans, and being brutally honest about how are actions today affect tomorrow. Sugar coating our current reality will only perpetuate our existing habit of not taking responsibility for the challenges already present in the places we work, live and play.

## **Kim Graham**

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One area we have not addressed is how a municipality can link it's day to day activities to the community vision and goals.

The City has developed a Strategic Reference Model for the City of Saint John, based on the Governments of Canada Strategic Reference Model (GSRM), This reference model which provides the foundation for the City's Planning Framework.

The Reference Model is graphical representation of the `business' of local government. In describing government as a business, the complexity associated with the delivery of municipal services cannot be minimized. Unlike a business that focuses on one or two client or customer needs, an effective government focuses on many needs; requiring a tremendous balancing act in terms of managing limited resources across competing needs.

In the Reference Model there is a distinction between the governance and

administrative functions. Simply stated, governance is Council's decision-making process. Council's role as a decision-making body is to focus on policy development; setting the strategic direction for the community that will also act as a guide for the corporation (and other civic partners) towards supporting the achievement of desired outcomes. While Council has the responsibility of setting priorities, the administration is responsible for the design and management of the many services required to fulfil those needs.

The model illustrates how daily activities directly relate to vision outcomes, inspiring all stakeholders toward achieving common goals. While the vision represents the long-term plan for the community, services represent the actions required to achieve the vision.

With a clear direction from Council on the priorities for the community, the administration has a greater ability to plan and deliver services that will make a valued impact.

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**File attachment** [Strategic Reference Model.doc](#) (45 KB)

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## **Chris Ling**

We would be grateful if you could complete our post-dialogue survey at:

<http://www.survey.crcresearch.org/?sid=7>

Please answer as soon as possible and thank you in advance for helping us with this work on e-Dialogues.

Also there has been a vibrant discussion in the Audience - this discussion is open for 24 hours, so if you are able please take the time to join them and continue the discussion with a wider group of people.

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## **Ann Dale**

Thank you, my head is spinning with new ideas about possibly how to connect the dots between the work being done on the ground and try to speed the exploitation of knowledge and experiences around ICSPs. I will commit my government to making this its highest priority:)

I would like to conclude with a question from the e-audience that could be the

subject of another e-dialogue and that is key to our subject, from Chad Park, an advisor to The Natural Step. "It can be hard to find the right balance between capacity-building/education" and "community consultation", particularly for local governments leading a process. And sometimes it's hard for some to see the business case for an education component preceding or built into a planning process? Have others faced this challenge or seen innovative approaches?"

The e-audience section will remain open for another 24 hours to accommodate participation from different time zones, and I invite and encourage everyone to continue this dialogue. We will be publishing both the panel and the audience conversations on line in the archives for your future reference. Again, my profound thanks for what I have learned today.