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Royal Roads University

e-Focus Group on Integrated Community Sustainability Planning

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Moderated by Drs. Ann Dale and Marilyn Hamilton

Participants

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Rob McLaren, WHW Architects

Sean Pander, Program Manager, Vancouver Climate Change Protection Program

Margaret Steele, Community Developer, Grand Forks, British Columbia

Dialogue

Ann Dale

Thank you for joining us today. Unfortunately, Peter Andzans and Margaret Steele are unable to participate, although they have kindly contributed their ideas, post-dialogue, included at the end of our conversation. I would like to start by asking each of you to briefly introduce yourselves and explain your passion for integrated community planning?

Chris Ling

I have worked with Ann on the Sustainable Infrastructure project and contributed to the development of the Integrated Planning tool we are discussing today.

The way society lives with the landscape we inhabit and the degree to which communities have control over those landscapes is, I believe a fundamental part of sustainable development.

Ann Dale

Chris, there appears to be some technical difficulties, in the meantime, can you explain what you think integrated community planning is all about?

Chris Ling

I think it is two things – firstly, a process whereby all aspects of local decision making that impact on how and where communities develop and grow are brought together in one process. And secondly, a process which brings decision makers and those that are impacted by those decisions together.

Sean Pander

The dialogue appears to have just "unlocked" for me. Sean Pander here, Climate Protection Program Manager for the City of Vancouver

Ann Dale

Welcome, Sean, I apologize for the technical issues. What does integrated community planning mean for you?

Marilyn Hamilton

Hi this is Marilyn Hamilton. My day jobs with Integral City and Associate Professor in the School of Leadership at Royal Roads University connect with the challenges of integration every day. My pro bono work includes chairing the Abbotsford Community Foundation and co-convening Imagine Abbotsford. I am particularly interested in integrated community sustainability planning and tools that make that possible because I see so much effort and/or so much apathy and so little alignment in the direction given by city hall, NGO/NPO's and the private sector. I am interested in creating whole-system tools that engage both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of community within the context of a living environment. I am honoured to be here with everyone.

Karen Hurley

Ann, in response to your opening remarks...

My passion for integrated planning comes from an understanding that we cannot create community until we first envision it – participatory planning processes hold great promise in

being an opportunity to create community visions as guides to sustainability (socially just and ecologically sound) -- IF -- they are done well.

Ann Dale

What in your opinion are the greatest barriers to integrated community planning and the implementation of sustainable development?

Chris Ling

From someone outside the municipal planning environment it seems that the barriers tend towards the inertia of the status quo. There are many examples of good work having been done in the Canadian context, many presented on our project web site, but they rely too often on bloody minded individuals who refuse to give up in the face of the easy application of the status quo.

Karen Hurley

I agree wholeheartedly with Chris -- I worked on the inside and so much was decided according to 'that's the way we have always done it' -- there is a great deal of lethargy within municipal organisations and so it is easy for developers to come in and wow them with their teams of consultants.

Karen Hurley

What a delightful question... I worked on this off-line this morning after your email yesterday... would you like the whole rant? There are various scales...

Ann Dale

Why not submit the whole rant to open the discussion?

Karen Hurley

On a western societal (perhaps now global) level we have a single-mindedness about the urban as Progress and one 'can't fight Progress'. We have separated humans from other beings and from nature. We have established a food system based on food travelling great distances. We have communities where care for children, elders, people with physical disabilities and mental illness, is superficial and they have limited power in decision-making. We have local government systems where women are few in senior management and political roles (see FCM).

This results in important natural landscapes being lost to pavement and buildings. It means a loss of land for growing food. It means a disconnect between humans and non-human nature as it becomes an either/or situation. So we get in cities or towns total destruction of natural landscapes and food growing areas to create the built environment and nature limited to parks within and outside the city that people drive to (if they can afford a car).

From my experience a large barrier to integrated planning is the limitations of planning within the conventional structure of local government; and the associated weak position of Planning relative to the larger power of the politicians, Engineering Dept and Parks Depts (and even the weaker positions of environmental planning or social planning sections – if they exist at all). So much destruction of nature happens within municipalities in order to make playing fields, coiffed trails in 'tidy' parks, priority given to utility corridors along roads instead of trees, not to mention the obsession with car movement efficiencies and car habitat. There are too many homeless, lonely, unhealthy people. Cities in Canada need to stop being so self congratulatory and really look at themselves.

In terms of creating integrated plans, I have observed over the years that much good work is done at the community or OCP planning level, often with large amounts of public process, only to be completely ignored at the implementation phase (ie South False Creek in Vancouver, and almost every OCP ever written). This amounts to the large amount of wasted time in public process (Design 'Charades' we call them) and community participant burn-out because politicians and the engineering and planning departments are generally captured by the development industry so what gets built is what the developer or municipal dept wants – not necessarily the community.

Another barrier is the professional background of planners – they come from Urban planning schools – so straightaway there is a bias towards the urban as the only path to the 'progress'. This is changing as food security, social planning, and enviro planning gain interest amongst students and teachers but the senior planning positions in municipalities are held by those who were trained in an older model – one that places new development at the core purpose.

Also, many planners and Planning Departments see their 'clients' as the development industry -- not the community that is actually paying most of their salary -- and actively engage in helping developers and builders maximise their profits at the expense of human and non-human communities. Large fees are charged to developers so the feeling of offering service for fee looms high – not to say that planners need to be unnecessarily difficult at the implementation level – but rather that the links between the plans and implementation need to be strengthened.

Perhaps make every plan a bylaw??? There is often a big disconnect between those who write/facilitate longer term plans and the development planners who implement the plans.

Greenwashing is a new worry that is fast becoming a barrier to integrated planning... LEEDS credits are used to justify great destruction of habitat and are not connected to social needs. Compare the earliest proposals Dockside for social housing to where it is now. A developer west of Victoria is claiming LEEDS status for a 5,000 unit subdivision that will destroy huge

areas of wildlife and forest habitat. What is happening???

A big barrier is the lack of funding at the implementation phase.

Marilyn Hamilton

Hi Karen

... I luv your rant. I share much of your experience. I sat in a dialogue circle last week where I heard city councillors be pretty self-congratulatory.

... it took a long time before they actually heard others in the circle say life was not so good for them

... also later someone else remarked that the circle was lacking in visible differences -- so same old same old inside AND outside are barriers.

Ann Dale

I agree with most of your analysis, Karen, what are more solutions, embedding every plan as a by-law if something we have incorporated into our proposed planning tool? And Chris, is it a social issue then, are there constraints on how much change human beings can accept and adapt to, and what are the ways around this?

Chris Ling

Social, hmm. Psychological maybe? Most individuals when working from within an established hierarchical and intra-departmentally competitive as many governments are, are unwilling to 'rock the boat' in favour of a quite life and a gentle career progression. They are after all likely just following orders.

Karen Hurley

Thanks Chris, in response to your comment about career progression: Robert Gottlieb names such careerism as a large contributor to 'ecocide'.

Ann Dale

Marilyn, can you give me some examples of what you mean by whole system tools?

Marilyn Hamilton

Looking at the embedded links in the Integrated Community Sustainability Planning tool -- the tools offered by Green Mapping, Future Search, Community Planning -- all attempt to engage the whole community in the planning process -- as a first step of integration.

Rob McLaren

While budgets and bylaws remain impediments to community sustainability planning issues some progress is being made here in Halifax. The recently completed regional plan placed a moratorium on development while policies were established and now the document itself is poised for implementation. www.halifax.ca.

Halifax has been progressive, in fact setting leadership world standards for solid waste management and is now looking at improved recycling, establishing a contract to provide 40% renewable power(wind source)by 2010, and establishing a major urban district energy plan as part of an evolving community energy plan. Not directly involved in much of this but looks promising. We were heavily involved in Halifax's bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games where HRM officials was very proactive in setting ambitious sustainable development targets for major infrastructure/buildings development associated with the Games. The bid has since been withdrawn but activities remain. (John Crace)

Sean Pander

My experience from inside the municipal context is not one of lethargy but one of capacity. Staff here are relatively supportive of innovation but in a city with a number of "hot" social issues coupled with very rapid development, many staff spend the day fire-fighting.

When room is made (through political and senior management will), here are some typical issues that arise to implementing change (not planning for it):

- jurisdictional boundaries - e.g. most cities cannot change the building code (it's provincial) so cannot require green buildings. In Vancouver, we don't control transit planning or spending so cannot link transit priorities with need and land-use planning.

lack of standards. Cities don't have the resources to invent their own standards so change must reference nationally accepted standards. The absence of standards that push the envelope make it hard to require or adopt change. (e.g. until recently, there was not a good standard for testing and certifying the quality of bio-diesel resulting in a lack of confidence in large scale use)

Competitiveness - while cities have enormous opportunities to influence change, they must also be aware of competitiveness. If Vancouver raises its parking prices or building requirements too high, then business will be further attracted away from the core which can be very counter productive from a sustainability perspective.

Ann Dale

Sean, these variables apply to most professionals working within large or medium-sized organizations, do you have solutions for going around them, how can we, for example, spread

the diffusion of leading-edge sustainable technologies or state-of-the-art between communities, a large question I know?

Sean Pander

Ann, One of the barriers for sharing of innovation in my opinion is that it is hard for those "inside" to seek and listen to those "outside" because of a feeling (right or wrong) that those on the outside are not aware of the issues faced by staff (e.g. many external experts do not have local government experience so may not understand what is within the local government authority to do).

One way around this would be to foster sharing between staff in similar situations. The challenge with this is one of time, those that have experience with change are often very busy working on the next incremental step within their organisation and have no "mandate" to share within a dialogue. Listening to a panel that has 15 minutes for questions has not been a very effective way for me to really learn from someone else's experience. You need a back and forth opportunity ...

Marilyn Hamilton

I had lunch last week with the Project Manager of a new hospital being built in Abbotsford. He couldn't say enough about the PPP framework that the Partnership BC had mandated. In relation to Sean's comments about the control of the province -- if the authority/mandate is used well, then it appears that s/t like PPP can bridge many silos.

Ann Dale

Perhaps what we need is harmonization of policy between government levels, something the research team has talked about with respect to sustainable infrastructure, over 90% of our randomly selected case studies involve partnerships, either public-public, or private-public?

Sean Pander

I agree - many changes depend on partnerships (either internal or external). One challenge is that those that are effective are focused - getting two focused people or departments, or organizations that have a point of overlapping interest AT THE SAME TIME can be rare.

Ann Dale

And Sean, I believe, the leadership of individuals in spite of the organizational constraints in which they work? One of the questions I ask myself is how to connect these dots, the people who are leading the way, how to give them greater support within institutions?

Chris Ling

Or a process of subsidiarity with the responsibility for various issues taken at the correct scale - which it seems they are currently not in many cases.

Ann Dale

Let's move to the planning tool we sent everyone, how useful do you think it will be for communities, particularly, small to medium-sized?

Rob McLaren

When you refer to small/medium sized communities, how small is small? Can it be an identifiable neighbourhood of several blocks or must it be a municipal sized community with the existing diversity of government, private sector, social/economic and infrastructure linked together?

Karen Hurley

I agree that many of the methods within this document are useful to planning but could we back up for a moment...

The preamble to the tool implies sustainability in its broadest sense of environmental, SOCIAL and economic.... Is this truly the federal intention or is it green development --- a laudable goal in itself?

Ann Dale

Karen, our research tool is independent of any federal intention, it is our definition of what an integrated plan should be considering, Chris, any further comments?

Chris Ling

One of the major debates we had in preparing this tool was the integration of the social.

My assertion is that by integrating the community in the decision making process from the start, the social should take care of itself.

This is dependant on inclusivity (is EVERYONE involved) and trust (will the decision makers act on the consultation).

Ann Dale

Rob and Chris raise the critical issue of scale, at what level do we decide to plan, on the scale of a neighbourhood or a region, and in reality, are not cities just a system of embedded neighbourhoods if diversity is respected, what do you think, it is a problem deciding on the scale on one's plan?

Marilyn Hamilton

I wonder how much scale is related to effectiveness of political reach and the organs of governance. Perhaps not all neighbourhoods have the political clout to attract the resources they need to plan well??

Rob McLaren

The scale can begin at the individual building level, a house say, oriented to maximize the available solar resource, and build from there - the street, the n-block, the neighbourhood, all at least oriented to max out solar opportunities. Its a natural place to start and very scalable.(JC)

Chris Ling

I think more important than 'what scale should we plan' is a recognition that at any scale the planning unit is comprised of smaller systems, it is embedded in a larger system, and the boundaries between areas are sometimes the most crucial places of all, especially if located along tangible geographic features.

Sean Pander

This is tricky - planning at too large a scale often bogs down because of differences in interest OR if you have a common interest but no authority. Planning at too small a scale often means that the plan is great but the power/authority to implement change is lacking.

One example is GVRD land-use strategies - the GVRD is not the one to approve or reject zoning changes, development permits, etc.

Chris Ling

Which reminds me of one of my favourite quotations - by Forman in Land Mosaics: "We are

left with the paradox of management. One can more likely cause or create an effect at a fine scale, whereas success is more likely achieved at a broad scale."

Marilyn Hamilton

As we ponder scale of place -- what about time scale? These days we are taking up more place space but seem to have less and less time to allocate to whole systems thinking and planning -- e/t is just urgent -- no time for importance. So are we expecting performance from people with great intentions but we need to give them more time (wiggle room). Go slow to go fast?

Sean Pender

I think the question of time is a great one (where there is appetite for change which may not be universal - we must be careful not to skew perception by speaking only to those on one side of the universe)!

Is the solution to dealing with the urgent and ignoring the important one of organizational structure? Create a position (or two or three ...) with a strategic mandate (no operational requirements) with some influence and good connections ...

Marilyn Hamilton

Sean you remind me of Richard Register from Eco-city -- he has a bit of a blog rant about the importance of taking time for the important - compares the outcome of Easter Island -- as an example of doing only the urgent (in this case obeisance to a cultural urgency) -- thus putting everyone in peril because the important was ignored. I like the idea of creating new structures -- but would hope we would include others in some way so we don't create ""ivory towers of important thinkers??

Sean Pander

I agree. Not sure how to ensure this but suspect creating and embedding an external advisory council for the position may be one solution. We have discussed (yet not yet had the time to implement) something similar to this for our team here to draw on a variety of expertise and connections outside of our own local government.

Chris Ling

Which takes us neatly back to the problems in current processes - planners are bogged down

by the urgent and so are unable to devote times and resources to the important.

Karen Hurley

Probably all planning that has a sustainability component should have multiple levels of government involved.

Ann Dale

Karen, Rob, Sean and Chris, imagine you had an ideal planning environment, what would that look like, where would the authorities lie, how do we decide complex issues of appropriate scale, implementation? How does one reconcile sustainable community development, working at multiple scales, as Chris just said, fine and broad scales, a dynamic series of plans, that evolve, how?

Rob McLaren

Planning strategies can begin with a single building, say a house, ensuring appropriate orientation to take full advantage of the solar resource. From house to street to block to neighbourhood similar themes can be developed based on the solar resources with synergy kicking in to support district energy, waste treatment, grey water deployment etc.(JC)

Marilyn Hamilton

Can you let us know about any examples in Halifax where this kind of self-organizing plan has happened?

Chris Ling

I think that the base planning would be done at a 100 year time scale, at a geographic scale that included a city and its hinterland - easier to identify in some areas than others granted. The city needs the rural area around it to survive ecologically, the rural areas needs the city to survive economically.

Community plans then fit into the overall vision at a human scale - so in clusters around neighbourhood centres and community focal points.

Large areas of residential zoning would be banned and human habitation should be as dense as possible without sacrificing access to nature (such as the eco-city concept).

Karen Hurley

Ah the way to my heart... ask me to envision...

In my planning environment... teams would come together that include 3 levels of govt, community, development industry, business, social sector reps, enviro reps to do planning together. That way it won't be the community and local govt working away on a plan only to have it ignored or defeated by industry at the Council chamber. And it would be driven by a positive desired image of the future -- not a reactionary plan to present problems -- but one that celebrates the possible.

Ann Dale

The tool is intended for communities to be able to influence their municipal leaders and decision-makers, hence the emphasis on both process and actual planning, without a fully engaged and committed community, then it will have no implementation pressure. Another reason we embedded in the plan the requirement after completion to revisit all zoning bylaws, policies to examine policy incongruence?

Sean Pander

I think Vancouver is a pretty special place for those that want to innovate. The Mayor with Council support has created a city-shaping opportunity called eco-density. How to increase densities while decreasing ecological footprint, maintaining or improving liveability, and at the same time trying to address housing affordability. A strong mandate to explore this from Council is driving senior management support and therefore planning, engineering, social planning, parks, etc all have fairly senior people involved.

We are trying to create a structure plan whereby density increases and forms are connected to transportation infrastructure, energy opportunities, amenities (existing or potential) etc. We are wrestling with questions of how to enable district heating systems in existing neighbourhoods, how to maximize the utility of public spaces (like streets that function as parks, like parks that function like farms, etc).

Within our capacity here (City Sustainability Group) it is a window that is opening and we are redirecting staff so we can jump through it to changes we've often envisioned but had no (strong) mandate to drive forward.

Karen Hurley

I agree -- there is great promise in Vancouver's eco-density work. It is a good model for restoring an already built city to being more sustainable but what about protecting agricultural land and natural spaces from the development/growth frenzy?

Sean Pander

That's one of the explicit aims of eco-density. Let's create an opportunity and the appeal of greater density in Vancouver to lesson the pressure on regional farmland and habitat.

Two important things in this:

- things like the Agricultural Land Reserve and regional engagement are important; if we ease the pressure but other jurisdictions do not build off of it ...

- secondly, it is our hope that by achieving success here we influence others. If we can increase density and liveability without compromising the financial situation of the City and possibly even improving it (over an appropriate time scale) by more cost effective provision of infrastructure than others may be tempted to try something similar ... adopted to their context of course.

Chris Ling

And what about the hinterland – i.e. where most people in the region actually live!

Rob McLaren

Halifax has recently completed a municipal planning strategy that was intended to replace the old one of over 25 years ago. A major effort that itself seemed to take several years. Otherwise attention is focused on issues around a single project that influences a neighbourhood. It seems the NIMBY response remains strong. The HRM success with waste management resulted more from an imposed process than from pressure from the populace. Existing processes may have to be used with a benevolent leadership providing funding and encouragement.

Ann Dale

Questions of scale, time, barriers, with respect to the planning template we developed, are there any gaps, omissions, serious errors that you could identify for our research team?

Rob McLaren

Might there be a tool available or developable that would reflect a positive or negative, a pass/fail for eco health on a 10, 25 year time frame that would take a lot of complex factors down to a more simple comprehensible level in the way, say life cycle costing supports sustainable economic results? This would be a means to measure on an annual basis whether we are moving to the eco plus or eco minus in planning objectives/outcomes. A sort of biofeedback mechanism for cities.(JC)

Karen Hurley

Ann, I went through the document in some detail and can send that you later but in summary:

My request is that the team take more a leadership role in suggesting to planners that all aspects of sustainability be included in the ICSP.

Enviro mapping is not an easy or cheap task to be useful within local government. I was the lead on the first Environmentally Significant Areas Atlas for Saanich (that the CRD atlas was modelled on) and it was very challenging to gather the information in a scale and scientific rigor that was acceptable to the engineers and urban planners (who were looking for any reason to dismiss it). I had to go outside the municipality for funding.

Googlemap etc are not of a scale or rigour that would withstand challenges from those involved in development applications, decision making or the engineering dept.

This was only the enviro baseline.... Are you going to make suggestions for how to conduct audits of social and capital base lines.

Forecasting is not a useful planning technique to me – it is stuck in the bad news/methods/technologies of the present/past. Trends are okay to look at as part of where we are now – but if used in planning assumes a linear, singular future

Ecological systems – this list seems a little out of context – perhaps could be related to a planning context

Please don't encourage people not to be visionary or utopian --how else will we move out of our present predicament. Surely more can be said in the section on vision– in more visionary language.

“The sheer difficulty of imagining future sustainability different from the present is one of our greatest problems as a society.” (Elise Boulding)

Ann Dale

Thank you, panellists, for your time and commitment, scale, limits, density and meaning of place are all connected, and I love the idea of a biofeedback mechanism, something to think about further, any closing comments.

Karen Hurley

Any ideas on how our cities and towns can be quieter?

Rob McLaren

You could try the mute button at council chambers.(JC)

Chris Ling

Karen Hurley wrote:

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Perhaps these issues are linked - vision tends to be a little lacking in scientific rigour, hence easily challenged by the un-visionary

Quieter cities towns - plan so that people don't need to use cars.

Ann Dale

One of the things we tried to do in a [survey](#) Chris and I developed is to show people that even if you want to have a more sustainable lifestyle, if the infrastructure choices are not there for you, it has no meaning. Gets back to diversity, density and depth, I guess, and how to reconcile the small, mid and large urban centres?

Marilyn Hamilton

I captured the possibilities for ideal planning from the three major descriptions and sequenced them as follows. It gives me hope that if this panel continued to dialogue we would develop something significant and doable. Thanks for sharing your insights, inspirations and itchy shirts :-)

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Ideal for Planning Process

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Sean Pander

Ann,

I'm aware we haven't been providing much specific comment on the tool and time is short. I dearly hope this is being of some use. I encourage you to wrestle with Dr. John Robinson as he is my hero for being able to jump between academia and earth.

That said, specific to your tool one of the pieces you might try and create are mechanisms to run through it at a "back of the envelope" level of detail. My experience with many tools is that there is only enough time/commitment to undertake the first part of the first step before it starts to seem like an exercise going nowhere. One example is I'm aware that the region has been trying to do biodiversity mapping for a long time ... In your tool, this is a small subset of step 2 of 5.

My experience from Climate Protection is that many communities engaged in externally supported processes to develop GHG plans but bogged down trying to get their GHG inventories "just so". The experience of "morass" soured many otherwise champions. Here we took a relatively quick kick at the inventory first time around so we knew what was most relevant. Now we are moving, we return to greater levels of detail ...

Rob McLaren

I like the ability for this document to link to other informative sites. If this were a web-based tool that could be regularly updated to stay current, it would be useful in the hands of private individuals.

I am concerned about the cost to implement this process. Not just for research and mapping, but for getting the participants together (that aren't paid municipal positions), informing them and maintaining the communication.

Karen Hurley

And I think to level the playing field...those not on staff of govt or industry should receive participant funding -- if only an honourium.

Ann Dale

Your comments have been most helpful, for your information, my research team is looking for a community with which we could work to test the tool and then evaluate its effectiveness and at no cost, so if you know of any likely candidates, please advise. Sean, Chris, Rob, Karen,

invaluable, will send you a copy of our final report to the Federal Government and hopefully, you will see your wonderful ideas reflected. Good night, thank you again for your time.

Sean Pander

In moving ahead with creating a useful tool, you might create a workshop opportunity to move simulate its use. Not talking about a high tech piece but maybe do some background work on a real or imagined community and then role play a day through it so people could learn about the tool(s), gain some confidence in deciding when good enough is good enough, etc.

Rob McLaren

Thank you for the opportunity to participate.
We enjoyed the process, and look forward to the document going forward

(John and Rob)

Post-Dialogue Comments

Peter Andzans

The tool is an excellent guide for communities to pursue sustainability. It offers many worthwhile, essential even, suggestions for communities to undertake Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP).

Fundamentally, however, my perception of Integrated Community Sustainability Planning may be somewhat different than what is offered in the report.

Community sustainability, I believe, is a different matter than sustainable community development which the report cites as the objective for ICSP. The former clearly includes economic, social and environmental sustainability whereas the latter, at least to me, implies a sustainable physical environment, and even more specifically a sustainable built environment (i.e. development).

Sustainability, I believe, is not an end state. Consequently, a static plan cannot purport to provide the ultimate prescription for sustainability. Sustainability is an ever-fleeting goal influenced by changing, in fact rapidly changing, global and local circumstances. Therefore, any means to address the pursuit of sustainability needs to be a flexible, efficient process.

My understanding of Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (as opposed to an

Integrated Community Sustainability Plan) is that it is just such a means. That is, ICSP is a planning process to pursue sustainability not an end product such as a plan. Plans, policies, and strategies can be used to pursue sustainability at individual community levels but no one single plan can be dynamic enough to absolutely achieve community sustainability.

The report rightly emphasizes that ICSP differs from conventional planning. It also astutely recognizes the fragmentation in governance and conceptual thinking. In fact, it could be argued that true community governance, as opposed to simply local government, may not even exist in most cases. But, it is still nonetheless correct that government alone offers a fragmented approach.

The pre-planning stage highlights the critical need to identify the processes and stakeholders that will inform the process. This is an enumeration of community governance.

Mapping, or conducting an inventory of a community is important. This seems similar to the environmental scan and SWOT analysis of strategic planning processes. However, a focus on growth and development frameworks does not adequately address economic, social and natural environment characteristics. Land use planning and landscape planning are only a sub-component of the environment, specifically the built environment. Moreover, the actual management of anthropogenically altered lands are even more important from a sustainability perspective than the spatial considerations of those lands.

The contents of Section 3 are an excellent guide in facilitating community governance and optimizing community engagement. My only suggestion would be that rather than saying “Sustainable community development requires a planning process that fully engages...” the Techniques and Tools intro is rephrased to something like “Development of a sustainable community requires a planning process that fully engages...” in order to focus on community sustainability as opposed to sustainable development. By citing the “community planning network” you potentially introduce bias toward conventional planning (mostly land use planning) approaches.

As opposed to calling Section 4 “The Plan”, it would be more useful to focus on that portion of the title which says “creating a [planning] framework [for sustainability]”. As well, my observation of your examples in defining the community vision is that they are very physical environment or built-form oriented. More social, economic and natural environment examples could reinforce the comprehensiveness of sustainability. Another comment is that by specifying a timeframe and potentially “concentrating on land use planning” you may be falling into the very “template trap” that you warn about in your direction to learn from other communities.

The process on page five is valuable. My only comments on it are similar to my previous ones. Under “Determine the Objectives and Institutional Needs” there seems to be a focus on government (laws, regulations) without enough consideration potentially of the aspects of community governance (eg. general attitudes, involvement of sectors, industry stewardship, etc.). As well, there is continued reference to “sustainable community development” or “sustainable development” as opposed to sustainability or community sustainability. And by “imbedding the plan in a by-law or in municipal planning policy” it limits the comprehensiveness

and effectiveness of the broader sustainability approaches needed. Similarly, revising planning regulations may assist in achieving sustainability in the built environment but will do nothing for the economic and social components.

As a planning practitioner with considerable experience I would make one final observation. I believe many planners, certainly those properly credentialed, have been practicing the planning approach that is advocated in this report for many years. McHarg and others espoused these approaches years ago and good planners have followed them. Whether the decision-making frameworks have embraced these is another matter. Consequently, if the focus of the ICSP tool remains as sustainable development then I do not see as much benefit in it compared to if it were expanded to encompass the broader concept of community sustainability.

Margaret Steele

1. In your opinion, what are the biggest barriers to integrated planning in this country?

I think the biggest barrier is that we generally do not have good processes or structures in place in our communities that allow us to develop community visions or plans in a systematic way. Our public ways of talking and acting together do not encourage full expression of the diversity of views in the community, so essential for developing comprehensive responses, nor do they allow us to truly “hear” perspectives other than our own. Too often, we end up in polarized debates with our fellow citizens or municipal leaders, advocating our own particular opinion and our diagnosis of the issue and what needs to be done to “fix” the problem. We consider our perspective, the “best” one and are dismayed because others do not see it that way.

Developing an integrated plan must be seen as a process and public involvement in the process needs to be well designed and progressively staged over time to allow for knowledge development, reflection and ownership. Too often, public involvement takes place through one-shot referendums, one public meeting or a one-time survey, rather than a staged process where collective knowledge can be shared, developed and reflected upon over a period of several sessions. In other words, our current public interaction processes are not designed to move us toward integration, sustainability or planning.

There is no shortage of good intent on the part of citizens or community leaders. The lack of structures or processes to support civic dialogue and deliberation often sabotages this good intent. Integrated planning processes must be “big enough” and “strong enough” to hold the diversity of views in the community. They must involve the cross section of the community in a meaningful way and must be seen as legitimate so that citizens will be willing to put in the time and effort to participate.

So, I think the biggest barrier is a huge one, and yet a natural one in our development as individuals, collectives and communities and it will take time to overcome.

Other barriers to integrated planning, from my perspective, include the following:

- There are many different understandings of what “integrated” or “sustainable” means and without a process to inquire and deeply consider these terms, our definitions tend to remain as vague, abstract motherhood statements that can only result in murky follow through
- The traditional strategic planning approach is not effective in times of rapid change and complexity as such plans attempt to use singular cause and effect responses to predict and control outcomes.
- The traditional emphasis on “evaluation” as a summative process that renders judgment about whether outcomes were achieved is not effective for integrated planning. More emphasis should be placed on the emerging field of “developmental evaluation” which recognizes the need for learning and adaptation in real time (the action inquiry loop). In community, we are all part of the same system; no one is outside the system. We should not be looking to place “blame” for failing to achieve outcomes on one part of the system (e.g. citizens, municipal council, industry, etc.).
- Regulations/zoning have not kept pace with changing times . . . e.g. in my own area, zoning regulations permit only 1 dwelling per parcel and the smallest allowable parcel size is 25 acres . . . people are wanting to create rural co-housing, granny flats, small eco-villages etc and are running smack into zoning regulations that were designed in the days when the typical household in this area was a large extended family that farmed the land . . . times have changed but underlying thinking re planning in rural areas has not
- We still tend to operate in silos, both in terms of service provision and in terms of funding. Communities have been quicker to respond to the need to collaborate and work across silos than government or other funders (a good example of this is the emergence in many communities of CCIs - comprehensive community initiatives)

2. What are the solutions for going around or eliminating these barriers?

I think we need to look to the work that is being done by leaders in the field of complexity and systems thinking. This work encourages us to consider the following in our planning processes:

- emphasizing the importance of strategic thinking rather than strategic planning
- recognizing the importance of the action inquiry loop . . . plan, act, reflect, learn, plan, act etc instead of the traditional linear path of plan, act, evaluate, render judgement
- supporting leaders who have the capacity to ask the “right” questions rather than expecting them to have the “right” answers
- creating ways to involve the whole system (i.e. involving the true diversity of the community which will include people who typically don’t come out to municipal open houses, etc.; expect to provide “honourariums” or some form of remuneration to citizens for their contributions)
- creating plans that have multiple actions that can respond to the diversity of needs/interests/values in the community

- supporting CCI projects and pilot projects

3. How useful is the suggested template to communities?

From having read the tool, I am assuming it is in a preliminary stage of development and will likely go through more iterations before it is ready for testing at the community level. I assume it will be reviewed by other focus groups or in other ways to ensure a diverse spectrum of input and that there is time for continued discussion to further refine the tool.

I think the tool needs some substantial re-thinking before it is ready for testing at the community level. I have read it several times and have found it to lack coherence. I think a community would not know what to do with it, although I do agree it is useful to have included references and active links to resources. I hope the comments that follow will be considered helpful and not critical as I do recognize the largeness of the task you are taking on and it is often easier to be in a position of critiquing something once it is written than create it from scratch.

I'm not totally clear on the purpose of the tool, I must admit. From our correspondence, I am understanding that it is intended to be a process or a template for communities to use to develop an ICSP. As it is presently written, I don't think it is either of these nor do I think it is actually a "tool". It seems to be more a mixture of principles for consideration in developing a plan and a list of resources. I tend to think of a "tool" as something that operationalizes principles.

I think the document outlines some key principles that communities need to consider in developing a plan, i.e.

- comprehensive – social, economic and ecological
- participatory – engage the community
- long-term
- broad in scope

The first two of these, especially, are huge areas and to try to cover them well in a short document such as this is a very difficult task indeed. The whole field of community engagement itself is so large and I think, for many communities, is one that is not well understood. We often have assumptions that talking together publicly and making decisions is just about getting people assembled together and we fail to do the pre-planning that would make these gatherings useful. I think the tool needs to emphasize the importance of involving an experienced facilitator and creating a designed process to engage the community well. I don't know if practitioners of public process have been invited to comment on the tool, but I would certainly recommend they be invited to do so as I think they would have a lot to offer. From my perspective, it is vital that communities be given tools and supports for effective community engagement as there can be much damage done from continual efforts to bring people together asking for their input and not having it done well. Citizens can easily end up being burned out by being asked one more time what they think about "x" and then seemingly have nothing happen.

The concept of an integrated plan that includes the social, economic and ecological

imperative is also huge and I think the tool needs to better address what that means on the ground. It is not clear to me how the tool supports communities in developing a plan that truly integrates these three areas.

One of the key things I think systems theory and complexity science reminds us of is to place more importance on the questions we ask ourselves. The way the question is framed can either limit the range of answers available to us or open the conversation up for the emergence of creative ideas. Therefore, I think it would be helpful in a tool like this to present some key questions for municipalities to consider in developing an ICSP. I think you have included some of these in your tool but I feel they need to be given more importance and should be presented right at the start. Examples of questions I am thinking of include:

- What does sustainability mean to our community? (It would be helpful to provide some examples.)
- Why do we need an integrated community sustainability plan in our community? (Again, would be helpful to include some definitions . . . I find the definitions in the UBCM document useful as they relate directly to the Gas Tax Agreement – see link)
- <http://ubcm.fileprosite.com/content/pdfstorage/B4D39F912A3D4798B286D4129AA B4896-ICSPProgramGuide.pdf>
- How can we include feedback loops in our sustainability plan to ensure it is adaptable over time? (I think the sustainability indicator movement has been helpful in providing good baseline data and feedback for communities in terms of movement towards sustainability. .but perhaps not so helpful in terms of how to use these indicators in creating action plans and decisions or making trade-offs among differing priorities)
- How can we accommodate a range of actions in our ICSP that will respond to the diverse interests/needs/values within our community?

4. Are there any elements missing?

I think I have probably covered this question in my response to #3 above.