

## City of Port Coquitlam Sustainability Initiative

The roots of the Sustainability Initiative are in the 2002 Corporate Strategic Plan and 2005 Official Community Plan; its branches are the various activities comprising the Initiative, which leaf a community legacy. A vibrant community of over 57,000 located in the northeast sector of Greater Vancouver, Port Coquitlam boasts a picturesque natural setting, a strategic location, progressive business opportunities, small town spirit and dedication to healthy living that offers an exceptional living and working environment for people of all ages. Over the last several years, the City has been bustling with new commercial, institutional, industrial and residential development, much of which is close to its historical and authentic downtown core or in new growth areas such as the Dominion Triangle for commercial/industrial development.

In 2002, the City of 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. Community consultation included several surveys, workshops and review of the draft plan during the year-long process. As will be shown, the strategic plan provides the corporate overall framework under which all activities are integrated, aligned and regularly reported. The vision, mission, and values are listed below.

The **vision**, which was endorsed again by the community in the 2005 Official Community Plan:

**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 City's role in achieving the vision is defined in the mission statement and values:

Our **mission** is to work with our citizens to create a healthy, vibrant and caring community through:

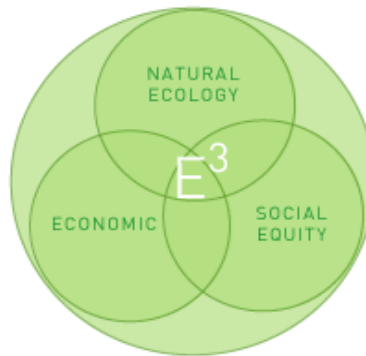
- ☞ Visionary leadership and accountable governance
- ☞ Citizen involvement
- ☞ Balancing the expectations for services with available resources
- ☞ Decision-making that integrates the social, economic and environmental interests of the community

Our core **values** are:

- ☞ Demonstrating leadership and providing transparent and accountable government
- ☞ Encouraging community involvement
- ☞ Building trust and respect
- ☞ Promoting innovation and creativity
- ☞ Recognizing the achievement and contributions of City staff and citizens
- ☞ Fostering open and proactive communication
- ☞ Being fiscally responsible

The City of Port Coquitlam embarked on a Sustainability Initiative in March 2005 through the Development Services Department. The Initiative integrates City activities that directly relate to development services, such as rezoning applications, building construction and social planning. As part of the integration, please note the activities have been implemented over a range of time with initial activities now reporting results, others currently being implemented and some are receiving preliminary approval. 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 E<sup>3</sup> community integration, shown below, which is the intended outcome of the Initiative.

**E<sup>3</sup> Integration =  
Sustainable  
Community  
Legacy**



The City of Port Coquitlam is committed to fiscally, socio-culturally and environmentally responsible land use development. Sustainable development integrates the three systems that support us – the economy, the environment and our society. Each of these systems must be functioning and healthy for us to survive and enjoy a high quality of life. To be sustainable, we must understand how these systems interact, and make sure our activities do not compromise the ability of any of the systems to function currently and in the future.

New development is essential to achieve a complete community in which to live, work and play. The location, composition, density, and design of new development projects can have an immense cumulative impact on our community's ability to sustain a healthy economy and reasonable cost of living; to provide effective and accessible public services; to secure adequate choice and opportunity for present and future generations of residents; to protect our environment, and; to ensure we all continue to enjoy a high quality of life.

The major components of the Sustainability Initiative, described briefly below, are the:

1. Official Community Plan
2. Sustainability Checklist for Rezoning and Development Permit Applications
3. Annual departmental business plans
4. Triple Bottom Line Assessment matrix for annual budget decision packages
5. Potable water source control program
6. Green building technology for City buildings
7. Green roof regulation
8. Green building and social housing incentive policy & social housing fund
9. Social planning study
10. Cash-in-lieu of parking variance
11. City land sales project
12. Tree Bylaw

1. Official Community Plan (OCP) – Adopted on June 27, 2005, the OCP was developed through a two-year comprehensive community consultative process with numerous opportunities for community input from community members and stakeholders. Fundamental to the community involvement was the “PocoPlan Task Group”, comprised of local citizens who directed the review process and made recommendations to Council. The community validated the 2002 Strategic Plan vision again by using it to direct the OCP, furthering the vision’s implementation. The OCP responds to objectives raised by community members and stakeholders while respecting broader goals for a liveable region and providing a sustainable community for future generations. Port Coquitlam’s future growth management will be more sustainable and “smart” by incorporating best management practices, such as New Urbanism and urban densification & revitalization over sprawl. Significant densification is provided for commercial core and neighbourhood revitalization areas through a balanced variety of designations and policies. These ideas and approaches will result in a more integrated approach to community development incorporating our economic, environmental and socio-cultural future. The land use designations support the continued protection of approximately 470 ha of land in the Agricultural Land Reserve and 400 ha of industrial land, both of which are under increasing speculative development pressure to be converted to unsustainable uses. The OCP has been used as a model by several other municipalities, and along with the Sustainability Checklist, received a 2006 Smart Growth BC Runner Up award.
2. Sustainability Checklist - As part of the OCP implementation, the City is the first municipality in North America to introduce a Triple Bottom Line Sustainability Checklist for all significant land development applications, such as rezoning and development permits. 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. It was prepared through best practice review customized for the municipality through community consultation with existing staff resources and no external or internally dedicated funding.

Developers and their consultants are important partners in maintaining and improving our community’s high quality of life. By providing sustainability criteria at the earliest development stage, the City enables developers and their consultants to create the most sustainable project possible. The development community has consistently asked for municipal criteria up front, have a level playing field and to know the goal posts. The Sustainability Checklist is provided to all development inquirers and is available on the City’s web site.

Through self assessment, the developer will determine how the criteria apply to the individual site. 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 the comprehensive system (e.g. LEED has 70 possible points). While the Checklist, in total, 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. The Checklist connects the incremental, site by site development to the community’s long-term strategic goals.

The development community was consulted on an individual and group basis, including the Urban Development Institute, and comments were received in meetings with the Downtown Business Improvement Association, Community and Economic Development Committee and Health and Social Issues Committee.

For integration, the checklist assessment was designed to indicate how well a proposed application performs to the sustainability and complete community goals contained in our OCP and Corporate Strategic Plan. The framework is useful during the application review meetings with the developer as

it provides common basis during the review and clearly identifies any areas where improvement is desirable and possible, particularly where the developer's self assessment score varies significantly from the staff assessment score. Developers appreciate the common criteria received as early as possible and understand the sustainability goals are a priority. If high scores are obtained, the application will be fast-tracked through the rezoning and development permit approval process. Environmental and socio-cultural considerations are integrated at the start of the development design process, instead of attempted add-ons after initial municipal review.

Council uses the Checklist as an assessment tool to determine how well a proposed development achieves stated community sustainability goals. As an essential tool used in their discussion and consideration of development applications, the Checklist will drive changes to individual applications cumulating in significant improvements to long-term community sustainability. Approved on January 23, 2006, staff will conduct an annual assessment of the Checklist. Three months after adoption, the Checklist won a 2006 Smart Growth BC runner up award. UBCM and many municipalities are using the Checklist as an example of best practice.

3. Annual Department Business Plans – As part of the annual budget process, each City department prepares a business plan outlining their proposed work program priorities, financial summary and significant issues and trends. The work program priorities are cross-referenced to the 2002 Corporate 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 reporting format with identification of any budget work program variances.
4. Budget Decision Package Matrix – All decision packages submitted by departments, including policing, are initially assessed by the senior management team using a triple bottom line (TBL) matrix. TBL accounting balances economic, social and environmental criteria. Two additional criteria are used, which are alignment with the Corporate Strategic Plan and Risk, which assesses the likelihood of achieving the proposed benefits.
5. Potable Water Source Control Program – The program protects the City's potable water supply from contamination by non-potable fluids through backflow prevention and grease & oil interception regulations. A backflow prevention device is required at all cross connections to prevent negative pressure backflow from non-potable fluids, such as garden hoses or boiler feeds, being sucked up or pushed into the potable water system. All food sector establishments producing wastewater containing oil or grease must have a grease interceptor, which traps oil and grease in wastewater before it reaches the sewer lines and watercourses. 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. All properties with parking stalls, other than single and two-family residences, must install an oil interceptor to capture oil, gasoline and other contaminants, which would otherwise enter directly into fish-bearing watercourses through storm sewers.
6. Green Building Technology for Municipal Buildings – The City is building a new Arts Village adjacent to City Hall with the official opening scheduled in December. The first phase, comprised of two buildings will meet the LEED Silver certification requirements, through re-use of the 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 in Leigh Square will integrate space for artisan work, display, sales and teaching with a community gathering place – the first of its kind in North America. The Hyde Creek Recreation Centre underwent an energy retrofit as part of its building maintenance program in 2004. Retrofit of conventional building technology with solar panels, heat recovery pumps and mid-efficiency boilers saved 33.9% in natural gas consumption in 2004 and 44% in 2005. Additional benefits are improved air quality with a 460 kg reduction in

nitrogen oxide emissions and a 96,360 kg/year reduction in carbon dioxide. Projected energy cost savings estimates are: 30% reduction in energy consumption, \$22,000/year reduction in operating costs, and \$4,000/year solar heating system savings.

7. Green Roof Regulation – A Zoning bylaw amendment was adopted by Council on December 11, 2006, which requires green roofs for all large format buildings over 5,000 sq.m. (53,821 sq.ft.). The primary purpose is to obtain environmental benefits including intercepting and reducing storm water run-off, improving building thermal performance and energy consumption, and reducing the urban heat island effect. Secondary benefits would relate to enhanced views where dwelling units or offices overlook the roofs and increasing biodiversity. The estimated higher cost of 10% is normally recovered within the first two years of building operation with the energy savings and storm water reductions continuing for the life of the building. Green roofs typically last twice as long as traditional roofs because the temperature is regulated. Port Coquitlam has over 200 acres of land remaining to be developed in its commercial/industrial park. This is the first green roof regulation in Canada. As part of the Zoning Bylaw, a variance may be approved by Council when the business case for a green roof may not work for a particular site, such as large, unheated industrial storage. A "meet or beat" variance to site design, using the benefit criteria listed above, can be considered by Council. This provides for the environmental and social benefits while still meeting economic viability. This 'win-win' variance process allows for sustainable site design, new jobs and tax revenue for our community.
8. Green Building and Social Housing Incentive Policy and Social Housing Fund – Developers who provide green building technology and social housing are encouraged by the City through application fast tracking and consideration of bonus density through the rezoning process. The City's first high density residential tower being proposed on our main downtown street was attracted to our community by this policy. Applications will be fast-tracked through the rezoning process, as the scores will be high on the TBL Sustainability Checklist, and go to the front of the line for building permit applications. Waiving of development permit application is also under consideration. The City has also established a social housing fund through a bonus density cash dedication from a recent townhouse development. The social housing fund will be used to develop future partnerships with the private and non-profit housing providers in our community.
9. Social Planning Review – Last year, the City initiated a social planning study to establish a current inventory of social service and housing planning services, identify any gaps and provide recommendations for future social planning priorities. The next steps of the review including hosting a workshop with local social service and housing providers to discuss the report and its recommendations. The workshop results will be used to prepare a final report to the Health and Social Issues Committee and Council. Many of the report recommendations have been incorporated into the Planning Division's work program over the next 3 years. The work program is part of the budget decision and business plan process for 2007 for which two public input opportunities have been provided.
10. Cash-in-Lieu of Parking Variance – Parking is usually the highest cost and the most significant site constraint for development. North American parking standards have been often criticized for being too high and not supporting sustainability. The Canadian public, however, continues to demand more parking convenience. One of the City of Vancouver's downtown revitalization successes is many empty residential parkades. Last year, the City adopted an as-of-right parking variance for residential apartments. Developers may elect to pay \$15,000 per parking space to a maximum of 10% of the total building units (e.g. 9 variances for a 90-unit building). 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. A key site in our downtown is under initial consideration of a public-private-partnership enabled by the bonus density policy and cash-in-lieu funds.

11. City Land Sales Project – Last year, Council approved the City Land Sales Strategy, which will see approximately 20 sites marketed over the next 5-7 years. A main goal of the strategy is to generate revenue from surplus land to fund capital projects, which otherwise would remain unfunded, require corporate borrowing or property tax increases. The City prides itself on having no long-term borrowing debt and is embarking on a \$98.5 million bridge overpass capital project next year. Another goal is to showcase best development practices, including green building technology and social housing. A triple bottom line matrix, customized to 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 that do not include those best practices. Four sites are being marketed in 2007 starting with a 4.3-acre mixed use site in our downtown. The site will have a high density of a 4:1 Floor Area Ratio, be required to build to a LEED Silver standard and provide community amenity space. The City is 'walking its talk' on densification, green building technology and social amenities - what is being requested of the private sector is being required in public land sales. The densification of our land base will provide more housing opportunities for an aging and diversifying community culture. As with the Vancouver model, the residential densification of our downtown, which has added 2000 new residents in the past 5 years, is now driving commercial revitalization. To implement both the 1993 and 2005 OCPs, City Council rezoned 271 lots in the south downtown in 2005 from single family dwelling to apartment use.
12. Tree Bylaw – The Tree Bylaw is designed to protect our City's natural heritage and acknowledges the value of maintaining trees within our community. Property owners may remove one tree per calendar year per property lot, provided it is not a significant tree defined as native, wildlife, heritage or specimen or required to be removed for purposes of an emergency, a survey line or a dead, diseased or damaged tree. A tree permit must be obtained for more than one tree, and a certified arborist's report is often required, particularly for site development applications. Trees help improve air quality, conserve energy, retain storm water, provide wildlife habitats, enhance the appearance of our communities, and may increase property values. The most significant change with this bylaw is the retention of existing trees on redevelopment sites. Parks and planning staff working together with developers have retained valuable environmental assets which provide a social landscape amenity for future residents.

## Conclusion

Within the City's development activities, the Sustainability Initiative has integrated the critical elements of sustainability: environmental, socio-cultural & economic; short to long-term, and; incremental to strategic. Through partnerships built with neighbourhood residents, local businesses, the development community, interdepartmental staff and staff and Council, the City is implementing a sustainable legacy for our community. This concept, from the individual to community, is illustrated in Attachment I. We note this is being done during times of the highest development activity experienced by the municipality, escalating construction costs, worsening labour force shortages and increasing regional traffic congestion. While it would be easier to get consumed in 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 together, work to achieve it.