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Sustainability

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FACT: “Today, humanity’s Ecological Footprint is over 23% larger than what the planet can regenerate. In other words, it now takes more than one year and two months for the Earth to regenerate what we use in a single year. We maintain this overshoot by liquidating the planet’s ecological resources. This is a vastly underestimated threat and one that is not adequately addressed.”

Global Footprint Network
http://www.footprintnetwork.org/gfn_sub.php?content=footprint_overview

Welcome to the New Sustainability Newsletter!

Hi everyone and welcome to our first sustainability newsletter. Through this newsletter, we hope to provide you with information on sustainable products and services, successful projects that have been implemented in other communities, upcoming workshops, as well as articles on various aspects of sustainability.

The idea for this newsletter was born out of SUMA’s Sustainable Communities Committee. With the desire to increase information sharing and partnership opportunities, the committee chair, Councillor Dawn Luhning, suggested that SUMA, working with SARM and MCDP, create a newsletter focused on sustainability & sustainable community initiatives.

A sustainability newsletter will provide a more topic-focused forum for articles and information. SARM, SUMA & MCDP all feel that sustainability is a very important issue that municipalities must deal with. Having a separate newsletter for sustainability-related items will better highlight them, rather than getting mixed in the crowd of the other great news being shared by our organizations.

MCDP’s Shelley Kilbride, SARM’s Laurel Feltin & SUMA’s Jenn Hurst will be creating this newsletter on a quarterly basis to start. However, we are optimistic that we will eventually find it necessary to send it out more often. **In order to do that, we need your help.**

We would like to include submissions from a variety of sources for this newsletter. For example, a private business that wants to talk about sustainable products available and how they work; communities who have implemented sustainable “Best Practices” in their communities; government ministries and agencies that want to promote services, funding or sustainable practices; or any person who wants to share their knowledge of/or experiences in sustainability. Although we will not be providing advertising space for companies, we do encourage them to submit short articles on products and services that are available to municipalities to help foster more sustainable communities.

We are all very excited about this new venture and the opportunities and experiences in sustainability that will be shared with you. We look forward to receiving submissions from you and hope you find this newsletter interesting and informative. If you have any questions or comments, please use the **editors’ contact information** at the end of the newsletter.

Contest: Name our Newsletter

This is a brand new Newsletter that needs a catchy name! We want you to help us name it. After reading the articles contained in our first issue if you have any thoughts as to a title for this publication – email one of the editors! The editors will review all submissions and our next issue of the newsletter will reveal the winner and the new title. **The winner will receive a basket full of goodies for their efforts!!!**

What Exactly Is Sustainability?

By Jennifer Hurst, SUMA

Sustainability is a popular buzz word that is often misused and overused. It has also been the subject of numerous definitions over the last few years. As a result, there is a lot of confusion over what sustainability really is, why it is important and how to go about becoming more sustainable. One of the biggest misconceptions is that sustainability is all about climate change and environmental stewardship. Although managing environmental issues is part sustainability, it encompasses only one aspect.

So what exactly is sustainability? The policy team at SUMA developed a website dedicated to sustainability last year. A lot of time was spent developing a definition that isn't too simplistic, over-complicated or limiting. www.sumasustainability.org lists the definition of sustainability as "using resources to meet current needs in a way that ensures adequate resources are available for future needs." So a sustainable community can be described as one that operates without exhausting its finite supply of natural, financial, cultural and human capital. "Resources" is an all-encompassing word which also requires some defining. In terms of sustainability, resources can include **governance, economic, environmental** and **social/cultural** resources.

Another key theme of sustainability is the interconnections between the various areas of community activity and resources. Sustainable governance is the mechanism used to manage sustainability objectives by the collaboration and implementation of a collective decision-making process between the public and private sectors and the public. Economic sustainability can include local and regional planning efforts to support innovative, entrepreneurial "value-added" projects. Environmental sustainability encompasses the protection and enhancement of natural resources (water, air, and land) and built resources (like municipal infrastructure). Finally, social/cultural sustainability can include equity concerns like affordable housing and immigration initiatives, cultural heritage development and the engagement of citizens in decision-making.

Right about now, those reading this are probably wondering "what does this mean for my community? This definition provides a good understanding but how do we make it work for us?" The next section will provide an understanding of the importance of community planning that takes sustainability into account.



Photo Courtesy of Microsoft Clip Art Gallery. www.microsoft.com

QUOTE: "The ideology of industrial society, driven by notions about economic growth, ever-rising standards of living, and faith in the technological fix, is in the long run unworkable. In changing our ideas, we have to look forward towards the eventual target of a human society in which population, use of resources, disposal of waste, and environment are generally in healthy balance. Above all we have to look at life with respect and wonder. We need an ethical system in which the natural world has value not just for human welfare but for and in itself. The universe is something internal as well as external."

By Sir Crispin Tickell, in his address
"The Earth Our Destiny" 2002

<http://www.bml.csiro.au/SusnetNL/Network%20Letter%2066E.pdf>

Municipal corporations have considerable resources at their disposal, most notably the leadership of the Reeves, or Mayor and Council; plus the ability to direct tax-funded investment in public infrastructure. The community has considerable resources as well, including private sector investment, volunteers, the community's identity and partnerships between the municipality and the non-government sector. By thinking in terms of sustainability, decision makers are able to get a clearer view of the "big picture." Leadership and extensive public engagement are crucial elements for maintaining sustainable communities that are prepared for future challenges and to ensure that adequate resources will be available for generations to come.

So instead of just developing a community plan, they are able to develop a **sustainable community plan**, allowing municipal councils to develop a forward-thinking community plans. In taking all of a community's assets into consideration (including effects on existing infrastructure, natural environment, and social and cultural networks) throughout the planning process, municipal leaders will be better equipped to make well-balanced and sustainable, long-term decisions.

Hopefully you have finished reading this article with a better understanding of what sustainability is and how it pertains to your and your community. Please watch this newsletter for future articles on more specific aspects of sustainability. We hope that reading this article sparked some ideas for action and planning in your own communities.

Best Practices

By Shelley Kilbride, MCDP

Under this 'Best Practices' section we will be showcasing sustainable best practices. Readers are asked to submit their Municipal Best Practices to sustainability@suma.org. To get things started here is an example of a Best Practice we can share.

Surface Water Intake Structures

Source: 'Surface Water Intake Structures' best practice found in the Manitoba Water Stewardship Best Practices Manual for Small Drinking Water Systems. http://www.gov.mb.ca/waterstewardship/odw/reg-info/operations-monitor/best_practices_for_small_drinking_water_systems-manual.pdf.

Maintaining Intakes

Inspect intakes at minimum once a year ensuring intake screens are not plugged, and in satisfactory condition. Check the structure location to minimize the intake of silt, sand and other deleterious substances. Back flush the intake line if possible. Use a qualified diver to inspect the intake screen and remove built up material. Consider the need for a new or upgraded intake if operational issues occur frequently.

Raw Water Pumping and Raw Water Storage

Low lift pump stations are often required to pump raw water from a lake or river intake, or raw water reservoir to the water treatment plant. For raw water pump operation and maintenance procedures refer to section on Well Operation and Maintenance.

Construct raw water reservoirs with a minimum of two cells. This enables withdrawal of raw water from the second cell when the first cell is being filled, repaired, or when sediment and vegetation is being removed. Cells should be deep enough to restrict light penetration within the depth of the reservoir, discouraging the growth of aquatic plants. Manage reservoirs to control taste, odour, colour, iron and manganese as much as possible. Use reservoir management techniques to address problems with algae, weeds, low dissolved oxygen and loss of storage capacity. Artificial circulation, aeration, algaecides, phosphorous precipitation, sediment removal, dilution, and flushing are reservoir management techniques that may be considered to improve the water quality. Adjusting the timing and location of water withdrawals can also improve the quality of the water sent to the plant. Discuss any plans for reservoir management with the Office of Drinking Water.

Source Water Protection

For a system that uses surface water from a stream, river, lake or reservoir, the land area nearby and upstream of the intake is the critical protection area. A watershed boundary is typically drawn using a topographic map to include the land areas where rain or melted snow flows over or through the ground and eventually enters the water source upstream of the water system's intake. Similar to a Wellhead Protection plan, the next steps would be to inventory the potential contaminants and develop a management strategy. Typically a committee of local representatives develops these plans on a regional basis. It is important for water system owners and operators to be aware of local land use activities and discharges (including any water treatment plant waste) that may affect their source water quality, and become involved in local watershed or source water protection activities through the local Conservation District.

Source: US EPA Source Water Protection Training Documents: <http://cfpub.epa.gov/safewater/sourcewater/sourcewater.cfm?action=Assessments>

Questions and Answers

Here individuals will have the opportunity to submit questions that they have regarding sustainability. Readers can then respond to these questions by sending referenced responses to the editors and both the question and answer(s) will be included in the following edition of the newsletter. Here is a sample Q and A below to get the ball rolling.

Q: How does using too much water affect water quality?

A: Removing too much water can change the natural flow of water in rivers or streams. If a certain level of flow is not maintained, the water levels can fall low enough to alter, or even destroy, the habitat of fish and wildlife.

If too much groundwater is taken, the small streams and rivers that are fed by groundwater can dry up, and groundwater storage areas themselves may be depleted. Lower water levels in lakes and rivers also mean pollutants will not be diluted as effectively and will require more treatment to remove them from drinking water.

Source: Canadian Environmental Law Association website - http://www.cela.ca/faq/cltn_detail.shtml?x=1505#1686 and was retrieved on Oct. 10th, 2008.

Photos, Facts, Quotes!

Do you have any interesting photos, facts or quotes about sustainability or sustainable practices? Please share them with us. Any photos, quotes or facts that are submitted by readers will be included in the up-coming newsletter. Please send us a source for your submission (i.e. who took photo, who provided the fact, or who provided the quote) so the reference can also be included in the newsletter.

Upcoming Workshops: Sustainable Planning & Development for Small Communities

MCDP, SARM and SUMA in partnership with Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corp. (CMHC) will be delivering two *Sustainable Planning for Small Communities workshops* this coming November 2008.

Estevan - November 18th, 2008 (FULL)

Nipawin - November 20th, 2008 (Space Available)

To register for the workshop being held in Nipawin please contact:

Jarad Hermanson
Development Officer MCDP
306-761-3735
jhermanson@sarm.ca

The purpose of the workshop is to introduce the concept of sustainability in discussions about infrastructure management, policy development, public participation and community planning. In order to share the experience of Saskatchewan communities and to give participants an opportunity to explore possible approaches suited to their local needs; we are currently in the process of 'Saskatchewanizing' the CMHC/MCDP work book.

To do this, we are asking Municipalities to write a description of a Sustainable Community project- previous or current. Each registered municipality that submits a Sustainable Case Study will receive one **FREE registration**. These case studies should be approximately two pages in length and include the following points:

1. When was the project initiated, and by whom?
2. Where there any regulatory obstacles? If so, how were they overcome?
3. How did you achieve buy-in from council and/or the community?
4. What external funding, if any, did you receive?
5. Lessons learned
6. Photo of the project

All submissions will be reviewed and approximately five will be chosen to be showcased. All submissions will be posted on the MCDP website. Please forward your submissions to skilbride@sarm.ca no later than Oct. 31st, 2008.

The Newsletter Editors

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