

COUNCIL BRIEFING NOTE**Project:** 2014 Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP) Update**Prepared by:** Gabriel Clarke**Date Prepared:** March 24, 2014

BRIEFING NOTE:

Issue: Parkland County requires an updated ICSP, and this briefing note outlines a proposed framework for completing the ICSP review.

Background:**What is an ICSP?**

- Long term plan (30 year focus)
- Plan focused on ensuring the long term sustainability of Parkland County
- Developed with community input, administrative input, and approved by council
- Contains goals, measurable targets, and initiatives
- May employ education, incentives and regulation-based tools to shift both policy and behavior of the corporation and the community to a more sustainable County.
- Provides for regular updates to Council and administration

Municipal Integration:

A key aspect of Integrated Community Sustainability Planning is to ensure alignment and integration of Parkland County's corporate strategic documents. In order to ensure that this occurs, the vision, and principles developed as part of the Municipal Development Planning (MDP) process will also form the basis of all discussions related to the Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP) process.

In fact, while both initiatives were initiated as separate projects, the General Manager of Development Services has directed that they now be jointly undertaken as one. Public engagement sessions originally planned for the MDP project, and which were undertaken in January and March of 2014 have already been reshaped to incorporate components related to Community Sustainability. Continued efforts by Environmental Services and the Planning and Development Department will be combined into one final product – The Community Sustainability and Development Plan (CSDP).

The Planning component of the CSDP will achieve Parkland County's vision through proper land use and development, and the Community Sustainability component will achieve Parkland County's vision through the development of goals, measurable targets, and the implementation of relevant community sustainability initiatives.

Moreover, in order to fully integrate sustainability into the County's operational philosophy, relevant sustainability goals, targets and initiatives that will be developed as part of the CSDP will be incorporated into departmental planning initiatives.

Provincial Integration:

Through regional planning initiatives such as the development of the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan, as well as other initiatives, the Province of Alberta is shifting to a management system that considers the cumulative effects of all development activities on the natural environment in a given region, and is moving away from assessing environmental impacts on a project-by-project basis. The Province defines cumulative effects as:

"The combined effects of past, present and reasonably foreseeable land-use activities, over time, on the environment."

- Excerpt from Land-use Framework (2008)

As a result of the Province having embedded the cumulative effects management approach in regional plans under development (i.e. South Saskatchewan Regional Plan), and anticipating that they will continue to do so when they begin development of the North Saskatchewan Regional Plan, it is prudent that the County also adopt this approach in its CSPD. There are a number of reasons for this:

1. The cumulative effects approach is more effective at gauging the overall impact of development on the County's environment when compared to a project-specific environmental impact assessment approach.
2. Cumulative effects management focusses on the achievement of outcomes, and is therefore an effective method for measuring progress in terms of achieving environmental and conservation related goals in Parkland County.
3. Adopting the cumulative effects approach at the municipal level will ensure a greater level of alignment and synergy between municipal planning and provincial planning initiatives.

Dimensions of Community Sustainability:

The AUMA's Comprehensive Guide to Municipal Sustainability Planning identifies 5 dimensions of Community Sustainability. However it also encourages thorough public participation to shape the development of everything from the vision all the way to the final product.

Below is a comparison of the 5 dimension that the AUMA employs and the 5 dimensions that our residents identified at the January 2014 public input sessions:

AUMA	Parkland County's Residents
Economic	Economic
Environment	Environment
Governance	Governance
Social	Community (social and cultural)
Cultural	Amenities (natural and built)

What is interesting is that all of the AUMA's dimensions are included in the dimensions that Parkland County's residents identified, except that residents grouped the social and cultural dimensions together as the "Community" dimension, and identified "Amenities" as an additional dimension which needs to be considered.

Defining Sustainability:

In discussing the 5 dimensions they have identified to municipal sustainability planning, the AUMA provides a general definition of sustainability for each dimension. An excerpt is provided below:

The AUMA states “Of the five dimensions, two are necessary throughout the journey towards sustainability starting today; these are:

- Governance structures that are participative and inclusive; and
- Economic sustainability.

The reasons for this are simple. Without strong and inclusive governance systems, citizens will feel excluded and maybe even resentful of governments, a situation in which change and renewal is difficult, if not impossible. Inclusive decision-making processes tap into the wealth of expertise and knowledge that exist within a community. Similarly, a depressed community without a strong economy cannot easily contribute to a healthy environment, a strong social fabric and a vibrant cultural scene. *Conversely, a strong economy is not an end unto itself, it must contribute to communities that are strong in all five dimensions of sustainability, where*

- social needs of all are met,
- there is a strong cultural scene that breeds creativity and innovation, and
- natural laws and environmental constraints are respected so that the basis for life; a healthy ecosystem, is protected.”¹

It is Parkland County’s intent to utilize this as a starting point for the development of a custom set of definitions for each dimension of sustainability that our residents identified at the January 2014 engagement sessions. The final set of definitions will be informed by stakeholders, residents, and subject matter experts, and crafted by staff. Council will be asked to formally adopt the definitions.

Why Update the Sustainability Plan?

The County’s current ICSP is only 2+ years old, but a number of issues have arisen that indicate a need to update the document:

1. Parkland County is updating its Municipal Development Plan, and in order to ensure strategic alignment, a shared framework is proposed.
2. The majority of the initiatives contained in Parkland County’s existing ICSP have either been explored or implemented. New initiatives are desired.
3. The majority of the initiatives contained in the existing ICSP were “low hanging fruit”: easy changes which required little or no capital investments. If the County wishes to continue on its journey towards a more sustainable way of doing things, bolder initiatives should be explored, evaluated, and potentially incorporated into the new ICSP.
4. Parkland County’s existing ICSP utilized the Natural Step framework, which has been found to contain some key deficiencies.
 - a. The Natural Step’s (TNS) definition of sustainability is more suited to explaining “Environmental Sustainability” rather than “Community Sustainability”. The TNS definition employs 3 environmental criteria and one social criterion for assessing sustainability. There is no cultural,

¹ AUMA Comprehensive guide for Municipal Sustainability Planning – June 2006

http://www.fraserbasin.bc.ca/Library/SPC/Documents/1_1_c_AUMA_MSP_CompleteGuidebook_June06.pdf

- economic or governance component – and in our case, an amenities component is also missing. Therefore employing the TNS definition of sustainability for ICSP development skews the whole process by heavily emphasizing the environment and neglects other sustainability considerations when evaluating both the status quo and potential initiatives.
- b. The TNS approach, as a result of the deficiency noted above, produces an environmental sustainability plan rather than a true community sustainability plan. This is because although the TNS approach requires the assessment of all five aspects of community sustainability, this is done through an environmental lens.
5. The County's existing ICSP was completed by a summer student over a four month period. The use of new staff and the short project timeline were 2 key factors that contributed to a less than optimal process for developing that ICSP. For example, the short project timeline severely limited the County's ability to provide the community with numerous and meaningful opportunities for public participation. Also, at the time, the summer student – first experience in local government – was not fully cognizant of the County's organizational structure, the extent of its operations, or the existence of many of the local stakeholder groups etc. Developing a new CSDP would address these issues.
 6. The County is undertaking a number of projects that will inform the development of the CSDP. These include: the Environmental Conservation Master Plan, The Community Scan, The Employment and Land Use Strategy. It is recommended that findings be incorporated into the new CSDP.

Proposed Approach:

What does the project involve?

1. Baseline Analysis
2. Vision Statement
3. Action Plan
4. Implementation and Reporting

1. Baseline Analysis:

The baseline analysis identifies sustainability challenges that are present in Parkland County and will be informed by the findings of the Environmental Conservation Master Plan, as well as the Community Scan currently being undertaken and the Employment and Land Strategy. The process involves assessing all five aspects of community sustainability (*economic, environmental, governance, community, amenities*) from both a corporate and community perspective, and identifying areas, issues and initiatives that violate Parkland County's definitions of sustainability. The baseline is a crucial component of sustainability planning, as it highlights areas of concern and informs the development of goals, targets, and the action plan.

Outcome:

- A detailed understanding of Parkland County's Sustainability Challenges and key areas of concern.

2. Vision:

The CSDP will employ one vision to guide Planning and Development and Community Sustainability that has been developed with resident input and will be presented to Council for adoption. This will ensure that the plan is based on one overarching vision for Parkland County. The CSDP will achieve that vision through proper land use planning and will also achieve the vision through community, regional, corporate and cooperative sustainability initiatives.

Outcome:

- One vision for Parkland County

3. Action plan:

The development of the action plan is at the heart of the Integrated Community Sustainability Planning process. This is where the County sets the goals and initiatives that will be explored and implemented in order to address the sustainability challenges identified during the baseline analysis. The development of the action plan involves a number of steps.

Firstly, the sustainability challenges identified in the baseline analysis are grouped into common theme areas, and goals are set for those areas with input from administration, stakeholders, and community residents.

Once goals are set, targets will need to be defined to ensure that progress is made to reach the goals. After which, administration, stakeholders and community residents will be engaged to develop a range of potential solutions for each sustainability challenge, ranging from education, to incentives and regulation-based initiatives. Once the range of potential solutions is developed, Executive Committee will be asked to decide on which specific initiatives they want to see explored and/or implemented for each sustainability challenge, and these, along with the goals and targets, will form the initiatives that make up the action plan component of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. Council will then be asked to adopt the plan.

Outcome:

Completed sustainability component of the CSDP outlining the findings of the Baseline Analysis, Parkland County's Vision, the sustainability goals and targets, and the approved initiatives developed to address the sustainability challenges identified during the Baseline Analysis.

4. Implementation:

Aside from the development of the action plan, the implementation phase of Sustainability Planning is the most important component of the overall CSDP project. Participation and buy-in by Parkland County departments in this component will be crucial to the ultimate success of the CSDP, as effective implementation of many of the initiatives will no doubt require their expertise and capacity. Indeed, successful, efficient and effective implementation of the CSDP action plan would not only require buy-in from all affected departments, but also increased inter-departmental cooperation, and the implementation of an accountability mechanism to ensure that initiatives are fully explored and implemented. The greatest challenges encountered during the implementation of Parkland County's 2011 ICSP were directly related to these issues. It is also recommended that all initiatives that make it into the final CSDP be incorporated into relevant departmental plans.

It is therefore proposed that the implementation phase be comprised of the following elements:

- Development of a CSDP implementation plan
- Creation of a County-wide CSDP Implementation Committee
- Assignment of CSDP initiatives to specific departments
- Incorporation of relevant initiatives and goals in departmental plans when they are due for review.
- The regular publication of implementation progress reports.

Outcome:

Parkland County continues on its journey towards creating a sustainable economy, environment, governance, community (social and cultural) and amenities.

Timeline:

Vision:	Current-May 2014
Baseline:	May-November 2014
Action Plan:	November – May 2015
Implementation Plan:	May-November 2015
Implementation:	CSDP adoption by Council

Budget:

Although Parkland County currently has the staff expertise and capacity to undertake the majority of the 2014-15 CSDP update, certain components of the project will require funding. Final budget are in development and may include request for the following:

- Public and Stakeholder engagement:
 - \$60,000.00
- Administrative and Print expenses:
 - \$5000.00
- Development and dissemination of the CSDP:
 - \$20,000.00
- Total: \$85,000.00