



SUSTAINABLE
BROOKS

Together, for a better tomorrow

CITY OF BROOKS
Municipal Sustainability Plan
October 2010

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Introduction

In our Centennial Year, the City of Brooks is proud to present our Municipal Sustainability Plan (MSP). This plan, which is a product of community participation, will lead us into the next 100 years, and ensure that our quality of life remains high. The MSP will guide and direct future strategic planning, project selection, and decision making; as we head into the future, residents can be assured that their municipality is working hard to ensure that Brooks is a community that people are proud to call home.

Background

The AUMA has been deeply involved with the concept of sustainability planning for years. In 2005, representatives from the City of Brooks attended an AUMA President's Summit on Municipal Sustainability Planning and began to consider the benefits of such a plan.

In the summer of 2008, the City of Brooks applied to be a partner in the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association's (AUMA) Municipal Sustainability Planning (MSP) Initiative, Phase IV. The vision behind this application was that with the AUMA, Brooks could develop an MSP that would unify the desire of the community and the capacity of the municipality. When it was announced that Brooks' application was successful, we set to work right away.

In the winter of 2008, City staff drafted an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) in order to comply with requirements for grant applications. This plan was based on City Council's strategic goals and was by no means a thorough examination of the community's long term goals. The completion of an intensive, deeply rooted Municipal Sustainability Plan will replace the ICSP and be implemented at all levels of the municipal organization.

Community Consultation Process

Over the course of the past decade, the City of Brooks has shown a commitment to public consultation and community engagement. The Council of the City of Brooks believes in the democratic process and feels that good decisions are made when a diverse set of opinions and concerns have been heard.

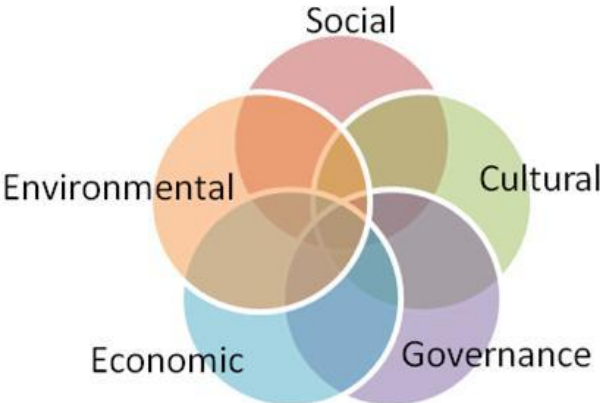
The Municipal Sustainability Planning Process focused strongly around the merit of extensive community consultation. As such, significant efforts were put forth by the City of Brooks to obtain feedback regarding the future of our community. This was done through open house consultation sessions, paper surveys, electronic surveys, online polls, and through informal information gathering at various public events. All together, over 390 residents provided feedback through formal channels and approximately 250 more gave input through informal settings.

Guidebook

The City of Brooks Municipal Sustainability Plan was drafted through the direction of AUMA’s *Comprehensive Guide for Municipal Sustainability Planning*, June 2006. This guidebook was used to help direct the processes and procedures necessary for completing an MSP, and yet allowed for flexibility based on unique municipalities.

Five Pillars

Under the direction of AUMA’s *Comprehensive Guide for Municipal Sustainability Planning*, Municipal Sustainability Planning should be done in consideration of five main “pillars” of sustainability: Governance, Economic, Environmental, Cultural, and Social. Though each of these pillars are represented separately, there is no denying that they are all part of an inter-connected and inter-dependant system. When one pillar suffers, so too do the other four; likewise a community cannot achieve success in one area without sacrificing the strength of the other four disciplines.



Role in our Organization

The City of Brooks Municipal Sustainability Plan is regarded as the highest level of strategic plan for our organization – all other strategic plans stem from this one, overarching plan. This includes, but is not limited to, the Council Strategic Plan, Recreation and Parks Master Plan, Economic Development Strategy, Welcoming and Inclusive Communities Plan, 3-Year Budget, Equipment Replacement Plans, Land Use Bylaw, Municipal Development Plan, and Area Structure Plans.

When appropriate, staff/departmental work plans may also be created based on specific goals and action items listed with the Municipal Sustainability Plan.

Action Plan – Appendix 1

An Action Plan (Appendix 1) is attached and forms part of this document. The intent of the action plan is to facilitate the implementation of the overall plan and strategic goals. Due to the flexible nature of this action plan, actions, responsibilities, etc. are subject to change as progress is made and priorities change.

Considering Sustainability Principles when Making Decisions

The development of a Municipal Sustainability Plan will help guide our community towards a more sustainable and balanced future. In order to get there, we must consider the decisions that are made today, and ensure that we integrate a balance of economic, governance, environmental, social, and cultural principles. Doing this will ensure that all of the community's needs are met and no area is forsaken.

In order to ensure that the 5 pillars of sustainability are implemented and integrated, Council is required to properly consider them in decision making and management. Councillors, Committees and Municipal Employees should have regard to sustainability principles when carrying out their responsibilities, making decisions, and making recommendations.

When a Municipal Employee makes a recommendation to Council, they should include the reasons justifying the project, proclamation, event or program being proposed in terms of the Municipal Sustainability Plan and Principles. If a project, proclamation, event or program does not clearly support or advance at least three (3) principles of sustainability, it is not to be approved. Greater priority is to be given to those projects which support or advance a greater number of sustainability principles or those that are listed within the MSP Action Plan.

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GOVERNANCE

A Sustainable Governance structure can be thought of as being participative and inclusive. The strength of the local government comes from the level of expertise and knowledge that exists within the community.

≈ Continued dialogue with residents – consult and communicate
City Council, Management and Staff will strive to establish an open, 2-way dialogue with residents. This dialogue will exist in different structures and formalities to ensure that every resident has an opportunity to be informed and provide feedback. All City Council and Standing Committee meetings are open to the public and residents are encouraged to attend and participate.

≈ Regionalized services and partnerships retained and built upon
City Council, Management and Staff will continue to seek opportunities for partnerships with neighbouring municipalities, service clubs, organizations and private businesses. Cooperation and collaboration are held in a high regard in Brooks and the relationships with our partners should not be compromised.

≈ Continual review and updating of policies and bylaws - enforcement to keep our community safe and beautiful.
The policies developed by the City of Brooks enhance operational aspects and ensure consistency and fairness across the organization. The bylaws developed by the City of Brooks reflect the needs, values and requirements of our community; these bylaws shall be actively enforced so as to enhance, protect and preserve our quality of life.

≈ Take a leadership role when developing and implementing practices and policies
The City of Brooks should lead by example and be a role model for best practices when developing and implementing new programs, procedures or policies.

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GOVERNANCE, CONTINUED

≈ Foster strong human resource relationships to attract and retain employees
In order to maintain service levels for our residents, it is important that the municipal government cultivate and develop the “human element” of the organization. This includes the attraction, retention and succession planning for municipal employees, as well as members/volunteers for Board, Committees and Commission, who are experienced and knowledgeable.

≈ Maintain fiscal viability while providing core municipal services
In order to remain sustainable, the municipality must be fiscally responsible and stay financially viable without sacrificing service levels for core municipal services.

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ECONOMIC

A sustainable local economy exists when residents are able to meet their basic human needs for survival without facing financial hardships. From a community perspective, local businesses are strong and successful, the cost of living is appropriate, and diverse jobs are available for people with differing levels of skill, training and education.

≈ Encourage and support tourist attractions and events

The City of Brooks will actively participate in and support tourism groups in our region. This may include but not limited to supporting, promoting, or participating in unique local events which will bring residents together and attract tourists into the community.

≈ Monitor cost of living

Monitor the cost of living for residents in Brooks. This may include food prices, petroleum prices, housing costs, property taxes and clothing costs. When possible, use political power and influence to lobby corporations.

≈ Encourage a variety of shopping within City limits

Encourage and support commercial and retail developments that will give residents shopping variety within our community. An enhanced downtown core, the development of a mall, enhancements along 2nd Street West or the addition of new, integrated commercial properties will promote local shopping and help support local businesses (both new and existing).

≈ Recognize the need for a diverse job market

Encourage economic and job diversification by attracting new firms, businesses and industries to our region. A diverse job market will help our residents weather the storm of booms and busts.

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ECONOMIC, CONTINUED

- ≈ Continue to develop, update and implement an economic development strategy

Create short, medium and long term goals that are specifically related to economic development and implement this strategy.

- ≈ Support and enhance affordable housing projects

The City of Brooks will continue to support affordable housing initiatives for those people that meet applicable requirements. These developments should embrace modern urban planning principles and be constructed within the community.

- ≈ Create and support opportunities for youth employment, attraction and retention

The City of Brooks will work to attract and retain young, educated professionals that will be committed to practicing their profession in our community; this may be done through scholarships, sponsorship, incentives or a co-op program. Nurturing this talent will ensure that high quality services will be available to our residents in future years.

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ENVIRONMENTAL

Environmental Sustainability means the long-term maintenance of eco-system components so that in future years they are able to function at a level comparable, or improved, to that of today. The natural environment encompassing our community provides habitat, water, sustenance, and a means for survival to a wide variety of species, including humans. It is our duty to protect this delicate, balanced system.

≈ Reduce waste in our community - Recycling/Compost programs

Residents, institutions and businesses within the City of Brooks will need to reduce their waste in order to ensure a healthy environment in the future. This can be done through education, reduction, refurbishment, and re-use, or through enhanced recycling and composting programs.

≈ Create natural and sustainable open spaces and habitats within the City limits

Open spaces and natural habitats are both important features of a happy, healthy environment in the City of Brooks. Whether for recreation or habitat, these spaces contribute to the structure of our community and must be preserved and protected. Any opportunity to enhance these areas or create new should be taken into strong consideration. Ensure that statutory planning documents recognize this policy for open space in our community.

≈ Conserve water and reduce consumption

As water is a precious and scarce resource in our region, it absolutely must be conserved. Water conservation, efficiency and productivity (and education for each of these areas) must be a focus indoors and out, and within residential, commercial, industrial and institutional contexts. Ensure that the City maintains an active Water Shortage Response Plan in conformance to water license requirements.

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ENVIRONMENTAL, CONTINUED

- ≈ Create a built environment in the City that is environmentally friendly and more energy, land, and resource efficient

New developments and renovations in the City of Brooks should strive to be as environmentally friendly as possible. The built environment should reflect ideals in energy efficiency, water/wastewater management, renewable energy systems, land conservation, green technologies, and community connectivity.

- ≈ Create opportunities for active transportation throughout the City - pathways for pedestrians, cyclists, etc.

Whenever possible, transportation routes within the City of Brooks should allow for active transportation to take place alongside vehicular transportation. If residents can replace automobiles with alternative transportation, less environmental degradation will occur. Local services shall be accessible through a network of interconnected pathways and active transportation shall be encouraged.

- ≈ Encourage the use of renewable energy sources – lead by example and educate our residents, business and industries

The City of Brooks will endeavour, where suitable, to progressively move towards supplying their own energy needs through the use of renewable energy sources. The development and installation of these technologies now, followed by education and awareness, will make the transition easier in the future.

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CULTURAL

Cultural Sustainability exists within a community when there is a strong cultural scene that breeds creativity and innovation. This is evident through the presence of visual arts, dramatic arts, heritage displays, musical events and recreation/leisure activities.

- ≈ Continue to draft and implement, through a consultative process, a Recreation, Parks and Cultural Master Plan.

Recreation, parks, leisure and athletics within the City of Brooks should play a central role in community planning. Facilities and programs planned for would be used and enjoyed by residents of our region and would have social, economic and environmental benefits as well.

- ≈ Ensure City run community events and programs are inclusive

Our community comes together very well to showcase our culture and heritage and this should be preserved and enhanced in the future. Community events should be inclusive and welcoming to both visitors and residents. Actively promote these events to encourage participation by both groups.

- ≈ Take a more active role in showcasing local performers, artists, musicians, and etcetera.

Local performers, artists, musicians and cultural assets would be better showcased and preserved through the construction/renovation/designation of a multi-purpose facility. Artists could create and display their work, and performers could practice or perform. This facility could be publicly or privately operated and could take a variety of forms.

- ≈ Continue to support the preservation of heritage in our community

The local history, heritage and culture of our community should be preserved for future generations. This can be done through already established organizations, and potentially new events and facilities.

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SOCIAL

A community is socially sustainable when the social needs - health, education, safety - of its residents are met. The community is welcoming and inclusive, the crime rate is low, residents are not impoverished, and there is general harmony between residents.

≈ Recognize Brooks as a welcoming, inclusive, safe and secure community

The spaces and events in Brooks should be inclusive to residents and visitors, allowing participants to feel safe, welcomed, and appreciated.

≈ Create and encourage social venues throughout our community

Residents of Brooks need to be able to interact with one another in public spaces that are welcoming and inclusive. Community gathering places - spaces where people can come together, share ideas, and spend time in a social setting - can take many forms, and many of these are present in Brooks.

≈ Encourage continuous learning opportunities, both formal and informal

Brooks is to be a community where anyone, of any age or experience, can enjoy lifelong learning and a rich education. This can be obtained through formal and informal venues, allowing for flexible schedules, abilities and interests.

≈ Take an active roll in lobbying and encouraging government so residents have access to healthcare locally

Residents of Brooks should have access to reliable, efficient healthcare that meets their basic needs to health and wellness. Physician recruitment and retention programs between the City of Brooks, County of Newell and other groups should continue into the future.

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SOCIAL, CONTINUED

≈ Settlement services should be available for all new residents

Newcomers to the community should be welcomed and have access to services that will help with values, norms, and customs. Work with local settlement agencies and various levels of government so that when new residents from various parts of the province, country and world arrive, they are effectively welcomed and settled into our community.

≈ Encourage community organizations to provide and develop social programming for all ages

Our community should offer sufficient levels of programming and support for seniors, families, children and youth. Quality child care should be affordable and accessible for families allowing for increased social development.