



## **Project Title: Civic Sustainability Framework**

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**Project Manager:** To be appointed by the City Manager.

### **Purpose:**

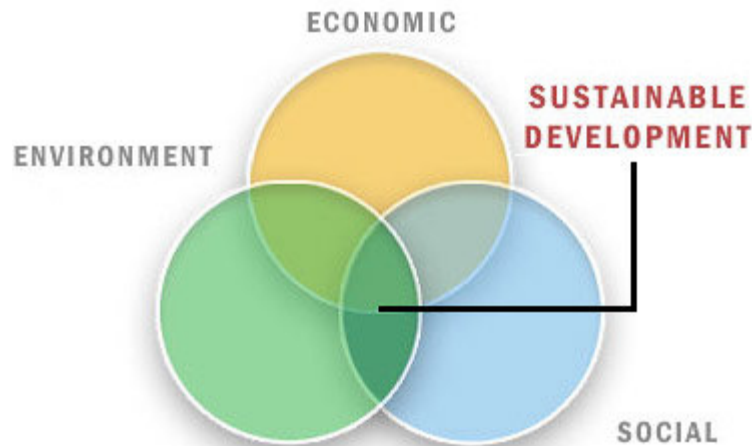
To develop a sustainability framework that will serve as a guiding vision of civic sustainability for the City of Victoria. An external consultant will be retained to develop the framework, which will serve as a starting point in the development of a comprehensive Civic Sustainability Strategy and the updating of the Official Community Plan. In the development of the Sustainability Framework, the project will:

- inventory current City sustainability initiatives and policy
- identify frameworks and best practices used in other jurisdictions
- assess existing sustainability policy gaps in City policy and operations
- provide a recommendation on an approach to implement a sustainability framework

### **Justification:**

Many municipalities in BC have attempted to ensure the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of their cities through the development of sustainability plans or the creation of sustainability departments. Much of the discourse in Victoria has referenced elements of sustainability, however, an approach to dealing with sustainability has not been formalized by the City. A Civic Sustainability Framework will help the City to benchmark its progress towards sustainability and incorporate a broad overarching framework that can be used for decision making. The principal justifications for the development of a framework are: the presence of policy supporting sustainability at both a regional and local level; the support and potential funding available from senior levels of government; and, the expertise within the corporation for policy development and plan implementation.

The City of Victoria is pursuing a Triple Bottom Line (TBL) approach to decision-making which embraces social, economic, and environmental values. The City's Corporate Strategic Plan advocates for a strategy that increases focus on the triple bottom line in City plans and practices. The TBL is defined as "the return on capital investment when evaluated and measured along financial, environmental and social dimensions." In the case of the City of Victoria, TBL has been specifically identified as balancing economic prosperity, social performance and environmental sustainability. A Civic Sustainability Framework will attempt to bring clarity to the TBL decision-making process and provide options for the City to pursue a strategic and practical sustainability agenda.



**Figure 1: The Triple Bottom Line approach favours Sustainable Development that integrates Social, Economic and Environmental considerations**

Incorporating all three elements of sustainability (environment, social, economic) in the decision-making process requires a holistic approach that transcends projects and disciplines. Within the context of the City of Victoria, the social imperatives are being addressed to an extent with the development of a Social Sustainability Framework. A more considered approach to environmental and economic sustainability has not been articulated to date, although many initiatives have been undertaken. More to the point, a working plan or policy which comprehensively addresses sustainability has not been developed. However, existing policy documents, such as the Official Community Plan (OCP), the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS), and the Corporate Strategic Plan contain language that establish the pursuit of an environmentally sound and sustainable community as a priority.

Recent policy announcements from both the provincial and federal governments have signaled a transition to a “greener” way of doing business. Subsequently, funding opportunities have been linked to sustainable plans and projects. A key example of this is the province’s Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP), which provides funding to help achieve a long term participatory approach to building sustainable communities. The creation of a sustainability framework with an emphasis on the environment would enable the city to strategically and cohesively pursue funding opportunities. The plan would also have the added benefits of helping to prioritize and evaluate sustainability-based projects and creating cross-departmental efficiencies. The exploration of sustainability would also provide a basis to inform the update of the OCP, and the further development of transportation, neighbourhood and parks plans.

Climate change will be a major tenet of any sustainability plan. On September 28, 2007, a number of steps were outlined by the Province to tackle climate changes and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 33% below current levels by 2020. This commitment has a number of implications for local governments and the City’s development of a sustainability plan. Among the items of interest to local government are:

- a legal requirement of all public sector organizations to produce annual public reports on their emissions reduction progress,
- Greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategies and targets legally required in all official community plans and regional growth strategies;
- Municipalities given the power to waive development cost charges as a way to encourage green developments, small unit housing and small lot subdivisions.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **Civic Sustainability Framework**

The development of a Civic Sustainability Framework is a corporate initiative that demands a broadly based and comprehensive approach. The use of an external consultant to undertake this initiative would allow for an organization-wide application that transcends departmental boundaries. In addition, a consultant team may bring to bear resources and expertise which may be unavailable in the City under existing staffing and work plan constraints. The City Manager and Directors will serve as the project steering committee and appoint a Project Manager to manage the consultant contract.

#### **Background:**

The City does not have a sustainability plan nor has it fully explored the opportunities and implications of a sustainability based approach. Numerous policies have referenced sustainability, and initiatives with sustainability elements have been undertaken, but overall there is a lack of a cohesive approach to sustainability planning.

The RGS and the City of Victoria's Regional Context Statement assert a growth management strategy aimed at preserving the social, economic and environmental resources of the region for future generations. The strategic directions highlighted in the RGS endorse planning practices that are consistent with a sustainability framework, including managing natural resources and the environment sustainability, keeping settlement compact, building complete communities, improving housing affordability, increasing transportation choices, and strengthening the regional economy. Further, the CRD is in the process of developing a Community Energy Plan (CEP), which is a plan for managing energy consumption and reducing greenhouse gases in the region. The CEP includes actions that focus on steps that local governments in the Region can initiate and implement to reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas production.

The City of Victoria's OCP speaks to many of the principles of sustainability, with policies that support a healthy and efficient urban structure, mixed-use development, reduced dependence on the automobile, preservation of greenspace, and greenhouse gas reduction. The vision and goals of the Downtown Plan Update also have a strong sustainability emphasis and articulate the principles of environmental sustainability, a regional economic centre, inclusiveness, wellness, accessibility, and flexibility.

At present, the City of Victoria's keystone demonstration of sustainability is the Dockside Green development. This City-initiated development followed the TBL approach, incorporated economic, social and environmental considerations into the competitive bidding for the development site. In this respect, the values, policies, measures and indicators used by Dockside Green provide an excellent frame of reference for the creation of a Civic Sustainability Framework.

The City has also begun to address the issue of green buildings policy, embracing the principles of sustainable design and development for public and private developments. One example of this commitment to green building leadership is expressed through the August 23, 2007 adoption of policy by Council requiring a minimum of LEED silver, with a goal of LEED gold, for all new civic facilities. A "green page" has also been established on the website to provide details on current initiatives, as well as links to information on sustainable buildings and development. Additionally, a consultant has been retained to examine the City's policies on green buildings and provide suggestions on voluntary, policy, and regulatory measures that can be adopted to further the green buildings strategy.

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **Civic Sustainability Framework**

Other municipalities have begun to address sustainability through the adoption of sustainability frameworks. One example is the municipality of Whistler, which utilized The Natural Step framework to guide preparation of its Whistler2020 Community Plan. The Natural Step is a scientifically based sustainability approach that incorporates systems based planning and involves the four main steps of creating awareness, baseline mapping, creating a vision, and implementation. The development of a sustainability framework in Victoria will involve an exploration of the experiences of other jurisdictions, in order to gain a sense of the best approach for Victoria.

#### **Project Scope:**

The sustainability framework will:

1. Articulate a broad organizational commitment to sustainability;
2. Build upon the social sustainability framework (in progress) to create a comprehensive sustainability framework
3. Create a working definition of sustainability;
4. Identify goals and objectives;
5. Identify existing sustainability initiatives underway or planned at the City;
6. Identify municipal, regional, provincial and federal sustainability policy;
7. Explore best practices used in other jurisdictions;
8. Examine theoretical sustainability frameworks;
9. Explore potential funding opportunities;
10. Identify potential policy, regulatory, fiscal and advocacy actions;
11. Provide commentary on potential targets and indicators.

#### **Stakeholders:**

The project leadership for this initiative will be provided by the Community Planning Division. Numerous city departments will be key stakeholders and provide input into the development of the framework.

- Planning and Development
- Engineering
- Parks, Recreation and Community Development
- Legislative Services
- Public Works
- Finance
- Victoria Conference Centre
- Fire
- Police

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**  
**Civic Sustainability Framework**

**Key Tasks & Timeline:**

Sustainability Framework Timeline	2008						2009						
	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
<b>Phase I - Capacity Assessment</b>													
Form Interdepartmental Steering Committee													
Develop Working Definition of Sustainability													
Inventory Sustainability Initiatives													
<b>Phase II - Research and Analysis</b>													
Investigate Potential Sustainability Frameworks													
Gaps Analysis of City Policy/Initiatives													
Prepare a Draft Sustainability Framework													
<b>Phase III - Consultation</b>													
Internal Consultation													
Public Consultation													
Finalize Framework													
Council Approval													
<b>Phase IV: Implementation</b>													
Draft Action Plan													
Develop Indicators / Monitoring Program													

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**Assumptions:**

- The sustainability framework will build upon and incorporate the Social Sustainability Framework currently being prepared by the Social Planning and Housing Division, Planning and Development Department.
- The development of a sustainability framework will provide a key lens and initial assessment tool for the review of the City's Official Community Plan, and other City plans, policies, and program initiatives.
- The commonly accepted "Brundtland" definition and conceptual framework of sustainable development offered by the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 will be the starting point for the project. Sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."
- A corporate policy budget line item will be included in the 2008 budget.
- ICSP grant will be applied for in early 2008.

**Constraints:**

- Funding for implementation actions will not be established until completion of the project, most likely starting with the 2009 budget.
- If ICSP grant is not obtained it could impact the timeline for implementation.