

THE Alberta Smart Growth Report

BY
ALLAN
BOLSTAD



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 **Sierra**
Club of du
Canada
PRAIRIE CHAPTER

About the Author



A L L A N B O L S T A D

Allan Bolstad recently completed 12 years as a Councillor with the City of Edmonton.

Significant achievements include his work to preserve environmentally sensitive areas (such as Poplar Lake in north Edmonton); helping to launch the Alberta Capital Region Alliance and a strategic policy framework for Alberta municipalities.

He received a number of awards for his work on council, including special awards from Alberta Health and Wellness and the Alberta Lung Association for promoting a smoke-free environment and an award from the Alberta Soccer Association for helping to launch three indoor soccer centres.

He also initiated and spent eight years as chair of a program designed to raise bus fare for needy Edmontonians.

Prior to serving on City Council, Allan Bolstad spent 13 years as a journalist, working as a columnist and senior business writer for the Edmonton Sun and as editor and City Hall reporter for the Edmonton Examiner.

He has a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Alberta and teaches government studies as a sessional lecturer to the journalism students at Grant MacEwan College.

He is a volunteer board member of Legacy Lands Society, a group attempting to preserve some of the agricultural lands in northeast Edmonton.

He is also the volunteer chair of the local organizing committee for the FIFA World Youth Soccer Championships, which will be played in Edmonton and five other Canadian cities in July, 2007.

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Foreword

*It is my pleasure to submit this report to the **Sierra Club of Canada Prairie Chapter (SCCPC)**, with the hope that it will shed further light on the steps needed to advance the smart growth agenda in Alberta.*

In order to prepare this report, I visited and interviewed people in the following seven communities: Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Strathcona County, Camrose, Drayton Valley and Okotoks. The objective was to hear from people in high-growth communities both large and small.

I also picked up information and valuable insights from four planning conferences hosted by the following groups: Action For Agriculture (Balzac, Feb. 25), Legacy Lands Society (Edmonton, March 4), Smart Growth Canada (Ottawa, March 11/12) and the Community Planning Association of Alberta (Red Deer, April 12).

While reviewing the state of sustainable development in our province, I was specifically asked to comment on the need for a smart growth tool kit or manual in Alberta – similar to those in British Columbia or Ontario. I spent a good deal of time considering this particular issue – my conclusion appears later in this report.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who freely offered to share their experiences and forward their suggestions during the four-month research stage of this project. These included civic and provincial elected officials and administrators, planners, developers, consultants and agency representatives – over 50 people in all. Their insight was not only invaluable, it is the heart and soul of this report (please see acknowledgements).

And finally, I would like to thank the **Sierra Club U.S. Challenge to Sprawl Campaign** and particularly the local project sponsors – the **Alberta Real Estate Foundation, Alberta EcoTrust Foundation** and **SCCPC**, who deserve a great deal of credit for having the foresight and courage to pursue a topic that is still new to many Albertans. It is most encouraging to know that there are environmentally-conscious organizations in our province that are willing to invest in exercises like these, knowing full well that it may be years before it is demonstrated that they were at the head of their class.

Executive Summary

There's no question that smart growth is a tough sell in Alberta.

The economy is in overdrive and many people – including key decision makers in the development industry - are making good money under the current system and are naturally reticent to change.

Use of the automobile is firmly entrenched and land use patterns to support it are well advanced.

Land needed for development is generally flat, easy to develop and in ample supply, with struggling farmers throughout the province anxious to sell.

The provincial government, which in other jurisdictions is the main force behind sustainable development, is largely disinterested. It is taking no steps to preserve prime agricultural lands. It has yet to do anything about a province-wide land strategy. It also maintains that it has no role in regional land use planning.

Some key municipal administrators and elected officials feel quite threatened by the smart growth movement and have adopted a position of denial, refusing to even acknowledge the presence of urban sprawl in their community.

On the road toward Smart Growth, Alberta can barely make out the tail lights of provinces like B.C. and Ontario.



Auto-dependent, low density, homogeneous suburban development, like this area of northeast Edmonton, has become the order of the day in most high-growth Alberta municipalities.

Public awareness of sustainable urban development practices is still quite low.

And to some degree smart growth advocates, such as environmental organizations, are viewed with mistrust and suspicion.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are Some Beacons of Light

Against this rather dismal backdrop there are growing signs of encouragement.

The City of Calgary is undertaking an extremely ambitious long-term planning exercise and significant community organizations, notably the Sustainable Calgary Society and Sierra Club of Canada Chinook Group, are pushing it toward a smart growth agenda.

The City of Edmonton has adopted a “Smart Choices” program which has the potential to lead toward positive change.

One small Alberta community, Okotoks, has had the courage to develop an extremely aggressive development plan.

A variety of key public agencies, including social development groups and crime prevention organizations, are beginning to show an interest in the topic.

The Canada West Foundation and a smattering of smaller consulting firms are beginning to bang the drum.

A handful of innovative developers, such as Canada Lands with its Griesbach and

Garrison Woods projects in Edmonton and Calgary, are starting to lead by example.

The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association is beginning to take a serious look at urban sustainability.

And the federal government appears ready to help with gas tax dollars.



Okotoks has capped its population at 30,000 people so it doesn't lose its small town atmosphere or over-burden the Sheep River.

PHOTO COURTESY OF OKOTOKS WEB SITE

Other Key Drivers are Parked Just Around the Corner

Waiting in the wings are some significant issues that should advance the smart growth agenda dramatically the moment they come into play.

Infrastructure costs are mounting, particularly in a cold-weather province where the condition of roadways takes a constant beating. To date, municipalities (with significant support from the province) have weathered much of the storm. But it's a matter of time before the costs associated with sprawl begin to attract public attention.

Key environmental concerns, such as greenhouse gas emissions, are beginning to demand attention, particularly in response to the federal government's Kyoto Protocol. Again, it is a matter of time before people make the link between land use patterns, energy consumption and air pollution. When that happens, the issue of smart growth should quickly become a priority item in a variety of public and private arenas.

And finally, the issue that will likely have the greatest impact on land use patterns – not to mention almost everything else we do – is rising fuel prices. Compared to most parts of the world, Alberta has had the benefit of comparably low prices to date. Once world demand begins to exceed supply this should change dramatically, bringing with it all sorts of decisions about sustainable land use.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What Can Be Done Now?

In the meantime, however, a number of key changes must occur before we can expect to see significant progress toward smart growth.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

First and foremost, members of the public must begin to see urban sprawl as an issue that affects them personally.

They must be presented with issues to which they can relate.

One project with good potential would be to encourage citizens to look beyond their dream home to their dream community. Does their neighborhood meet their needs? If not – and there are a growing number of public concerns on this topic – what needs to be done to ensure that we live in healthy communities?

Another hot button for the general public is traffic congestion. Most motorists, particularly in Edmonton and Calgary, are forced to travel significant distances at least two or three times a day, given the way our cities are designed. Any project which explores the causes of traffic congestion can't help but raise public awareness about urban sprawl.

Once the public begins to show an interest in sustainable development, political leaders and the development industry are sure to follow.

Steps for the Sierra Club of Canada Prairie Chapter (SCCPC)

There are a number of things the SCCPC could do to try to move the process along.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1) It could help launch public awareness projects, like those named above, with the support and cooperation of government and other partners.
- 2) It could encourage municipalities to launch long-term planning exercises, giving citizens an opportunity to chart a more sustainable future.
- 3) It could work with others to help develop and entrench smart growth measurement tools.
- 4) It could seek key partners to help it explore the connection between sustainable land use practices and greenhouse gas emissions.
- 5) It could encourage political leaders at the province, including Progressive Conservative leadership candidates and Opposition Party members, to take a closer look at the smart growth agenda. Growing infrastructure cost, and the key role played by urban sprawl in creating these costs, could be an entrance point.
- 6) Through working with the national office in Ottawas, the club needs to prompt the federal government and national agencies to include smart growth in discussions on key issues like global warming, energy consumption and rising fuel costs.
- 7) The club needs to develop and maintain strong communication links with the media and a variety of agencies, firms and individuals working in this area.
- 8) The club needs to come up with positive ways to acknowledge good projects, keeping in mind that its continued negativism will only entrench past stereotypes and reduce its effectiveness in the future.
- 9) Finally, all thoughts about a smart growth manual should be shelved for the time being. It doesn't pay to put a great deal of resources into a product that the public isn't demanding.

CHAPTER 1

Smart Growth vs Urban Sprawl



An excellent example of infill development is Railtown, which was built on former railway lands in downtown Edmonton. Medium and high-density residential buildings flank a central parkway / bikeway system, all within walking distance of employment, shopping and recreational opportunities.

What is Smart Growth?

Smart growth refers to land use and development practices that enhance the quality of life in communities, preserve the natural environment and save money over time. The aim is to limit costly urban sprawl, use tax dollars more efficiently and create more livable communities.*

* DEFINITION DEVELOPED BY SMART GROWTH B.C.

The Principal Elements of Smart Growth

CHAPTER

1

1. Mixed Use Development

Development patterns that mix residential, commercial, employment and recreational opportunities, thereby allowing people to do more locally.

2. Infill Development

Reinvestment in established parts of the community. Includes the development of vacant lands, rehabilitation of brownfield sites and the redevelopment of residential and commercial properties.

3. Transit-Oriented Development

Residential, commercial, employment and recreational development that is designed to take advantage of public transit stations and stops.

4. Multi-Use Trail Corridors

A network of bicycle/pedestrian routes that allow citizens to move about in a safe, auto-free environment.

Typically a three-to-four metre wide surface that serves both recreational and functional uses.

5. Walkability

Requires changing walking from a recreation mode to a practical transportation alternative for accessing everyday destinations such as workplaces, shopping and community facilities.

6. Preservation of Natural Areas

Ensuring that significant natural features of the community, such as woodlots and wetlands, are incorporated into the built environment in a sustainable fashion.

7. Architectural/Landscape Guidelines

Implementation of standards that promote attractive, secure streetscapes and diverse, visually appealing buildings and grounds.

What is Urban Sprawl?

Urban Sprawl is generally defined as low density, homogenous, auto-dependent development. This would apply equally to residential, commercial or employment areas.



Suburban neighborhoods, complete with the haze of automobile exhaust, stretch to the horizon and beyond in western Calgary.

CHAPTER

1

Why Is Urban Sprawl A Problem?

- a. It uses a huge amount of land, which could be productively used in many other ways.
- b. It generates a tremendous amount of traffic, well beyond the capacity of local road networks
- c. It is very costly for governments to install and maintain the necessary infrastructure and to provide services and facilities.
- d. It consumes a tremendous amount of energy, as citizens are forced to travel significant distances to undertake daily activities.
- e. It reduces air quality and adds significantly to greenhouse gas emissions.
- f. It forces adult family members to each own a vehicle, which adds significantly to household expenses.
- g. In the absence of bus service, it is very difficult for residents who don't drive, including children and seniors, to access community services.
- h. It collects tremendous amounts of stormwater, which impacts groundwater levels and challenges local treatment systems.
- i. It leads to neighbourhood dysfunction, as reduced local activities destroy community networks and inhibit crime prevention.
- j. It diminishes public health by discouraging walking and promoting vehicular travel.

Drivers of Smart Growth

CHAPTER 2



Public interest in preserving significant natural areas, like Fish Creek Provincial Park in Calgary, has begun to play a major role in shaping the face of urban development.

A) Preservation of Forests & Agricultural Areas

Historically, the principle driver behind urban sustainability has been the desire to protect forested and agricultural areas, which are quickly being swallowed in copious amounts by urban communities throughout North America.

CHAPTER

2

In the State of Oregon, which in the 1970s was among the first state governments to not only recognize this issue but to act on it, political leaders were determined to slow the erosion of forested areas. Armed with widespread public support, the state developed urban growth boundaries around each and every municipality, severely restricting the ability of property owners to develop or even rezone property in rural areas.

In British Columbia and more recently Ontario, the big issue has been the declining supply of quality agricultural land. British Columbia has had legislation in place for 30 years protecting agricultural lands in areas like the Fraser Valley, while Ontario has recently been pushing similar reforms for its prime agricultural belt in the southern part of the province.

In Alberta, a fledgling group called Action for Agriculture has been attempting to raise public awareness about the loss of farmland for the past thirty years. While determined and certainly well meaning, the group has little to show for its efforts.

More recently, the Canada West Foundation out of Calgary has begun to examine land use patterns in the province and identify some of the costs of urban sprawl. Given this group's positive track record on municipal financial issues, their entry is a welcome addition to the sustainability debate.

B) Preservation of Environmentally Sensitive Lands

Many municipal governments have recently shown an increased interest in preserving environmentally sensitive areas, such as the river valleys in Edmonton and Calgary or significant wetlands like the central park in Camrose or outlying suburbs of Sherwood Park. Interest from politicians, developers and the general public is quickly coalescing on this front and making the preservation of natural areas a major factor in shaping urban development.

C) Reduced Infrastructure Costs

Another area that has tremendous potential to limit urban growth, but is only beginning to be understood, is the infrastructure cost associated with urban sprawl.

Road construction is expensive, particularly in northern climates where communities are constantly forced to repair and/or replace roads that break up during the winter frost and thaw cycles.

Infrastructure cost is one issue cited by the County of Strathcona in its effort to construct a new town centre, which will feature mixed-use development, district hearing and recycled storm water throughout the complex.

In many areas of the United States, municipalities are subjected to a “fix it first program,” where the state wants to see the work that has been done to rehabilitate existing infrastructure before funding new growth.

On a related front, some American banks are offering location efficient mortgages, where homeowners are allowed to borrow more heavily if their transportation costs to and from work are limited.

Unfortunately, however, the issue of infrastructure costs has barely been touched upon in our province, as few communities have any idea of the cost associated with different land use patterns. Good information outlining the cost of different growth patterns is simply not available.

D) Reduced Traffic Congestion

Another issue of growing concern is traffic congestion. Common sense tells us that the existing roads in any community have a finite capacity and will eventually fail if a growing number of motorists are required to constantly criss-cross the community throughout each day. In many areas of the United States, including Portland, Oregon, the municipality has gone so far as to measure the amount of time motorists spend in their car and the distance they travel each day. They recognize that time spent in the car is generally unproductive and vehicular travel is expensive, so efforts to lower these totals are seen as a positive step.

Unfortunately, no work has been done on this front in Alberta. Even more problematic is the fact that the underlying causes of traffic congestion, such as urban sprawl, are not well understood.

E) Improved Livability of Neighbourhoods

There are also growing concerns about the livability of neighbourhoods in an urban sprawl environment.

At a recent workshop co-hosted by the Edmonton Federation of the Community Leagues and SCCPC (see appendix), social agency representatives were quite concerned about the decline in neighbourhood interaction and social networks. The main cause cited was the fact that residents are simply doing less and less in their own neighbourhood, opting to drive elsewhere for most of their daily activities. Workshop attendees noted the loss of community activity nodes, such as local schools, shops or recreation centers, all lead to a decline in quality of life. Crime prevention, which hinges on strong community networks, is being compromised. And children oftentimes have nowhere to go to enjoy unstructured play, which is critical to their personal development.

F) Improved Public Health

A growing number of groups are beginning to associate poor personal health with urban sprawl. Recent reports from groups like the Capital Health Authority and Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada decry how little the general population walks anymore when there is nothing to walk to and most activities first involve a significant amount of unhealthy and unproductive time in the car.

G) Reduced Energy Consumption & Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Surprisingly enough, energy consumption and greenhouse gas production associated with urban sprawl is only just beginning to appear on the radar screen. Very recently, Climate Change Central (an agency established by the province to look at greenhouse gas

issues) asked Dave Reynolds, a Calgary-based environmental consultant, to see if land use is an area the agency should explore. This is a discussion that has tremendous potential, should Canada and its provinces get serious about vehicular pollution and climate change.

CHAPTER

2

H) Water Conservation

Perhaps Alberta's biggest environmental issue, the availability of clean, potable water, is just beginning to weigh in on the sustainability debate. Okotoks, a community of 10,000 people on the Sheep River in southern Alberta is living proof of that. The scarcity of water prompted the town to develop a plan that limits growth to no more than 30,000 people. Already, this growth constraint has spawned a variety of land use measures and conservation programs that are unrivalled in our province.

I) Rising Gas Prices

Still further on the horizon is the spectre of rising gas prices. On April 29, truckers in Vancouver held a mass protest over the rising cost of diesel fuel, now pushing 85 cents/litre. What are they going to do when demand from China, India and elsewhere begins to outstrip supply and pushes prices to \$2/litre or \$3/litre?

This is obviously going to have a dramatic impact on land development patterns – not to mention western civilization. As such, it is nothing short of astounding that so little discussion has occurred on this topic.

As stated at the outset of this chapter, the drivers of smart growth are diverse and complex. However, it should also be noted that they include a number of fundamental issues that have the potential to dramatically alter the appearance and operation of Alberta communities, the moment they kick in.

CHAPTER 3

Drivers of Urban Sprawl



*Typical morning rush hour
traffic congestion on St. Albert
Trail in Edmonton.*

Probably the biggest stumbling block on the road to smart growth is the widespread use of the automobile.

Convenient, flexible and relatively reliable, cars are now used to access most daily activities.

In some cases, they have almost become a way of life. People use them as places to eat, make phone calls, socialize with friends and have a quick nap.

However, when it comes to smart growth, automobiles have huge downsides.

Perhaps foremost is the fact that they are extremely inefficient when it comes to moving large numbers of people. Road networks consume a large amount of space, which adds to urban sprawl. And municipalities are often forced to expand these networks, at the expense of local communities, in order to relieve traffic congestion.

The automobile also requires a large amount of space for parking, given that a stall is needed at work, at home, at commercial and recreational centers – virtually everywhere people travel. And in at least one Alberta community - Fort McMurray - residents are demanding more and more space on the street to park their vehicles. This is due to the growing size of the vehicles they drive

(one-tonne trucks are quickly becoming the vehicle of choice) and the fact that their garage is not available for parking, now that it is “stuffed with toys” (snowmobiles, boats, all-terrain vehicles).

Automobiles are expensive to operate, which in turn reduces the resources needed to support other community activities and facilities.

They consume huge amounts of energy and produce large amounts of pollution, both of which fly in the face of Smart Growth.

And the fact that automobiles are operated in an impersonal manner does nothing to improve community networks.

Finally, automobiles have also been influential in shaping the face of communities, many times dominating the space available for pedestrian and bike movements and influencing the manner in which commercial complexes are constructed. In short, they have been extremely difficult to accommodate in sustainable development initiatives.

Another key driver of urban sprawl is the preference many consumers have for large private properties in wide-open spaces. For example, it is virtually impossible to incorporate mixed-use development or high-speed transit in country residential developments.

There are many people with vested interests in maintaining the status quo. This includes people in the development industry, who know how to make money under the current style of property development and are hesitant to take a chance on something else. As one such person put it; “Developers don’t mind being leading edge, just not bleeding edge.”

Municipal zoning regulations have become very tight in recent years, making it difficult to mix different uses in any given area.

Some municipalities, like the City of Edmonton, have a 20% property tax surcharge on multi-family development, another factor that discourages higher density housing.

The general public may find it difficult to appreciate the need for sustainable development in some instances. As one developer commented, “it’s really hard for Mr. and Mrs. Average to see that we have a land issue, when they see acres and acres all around (our community).”

And finally individual citizens are often reluctant to try something new.

As one planning department manager said, “change is okay so long as it doesn’t affect me or where I park my motor home.”

CHAPTER 4

Impediments to Smart Growth in Alberta



The province's best farmland, like this area of northeast Edmonton, is quickly being replaced by suburban development.

In addition to the standard drivers of urban sprawl, the move toward smart growth is being held back by a number of other factors in Alberta. These became patently evident during the research phase of this project.

A) Ambivalent Provincial Government

CHAPTER

4

Probably the biggest single factor inhibiting sustainable development in Alberta is the distinct lack of interest by the provincial government. This is manifested in a number of ways.

First of all, there is no provincial land use plan that would help determine on a macro scale where large users of land such as industry, housing or agriculture might best be located. Without such a plan, high-speed transit connections between communities are virtually impossible to develop, land use conflicts are inevitable and inefficient use of space is commonplace.

Unlike British Columbia or Ontario, Alberta has no plan in place to protect its agricultural lands. And according to the Minister of Agriculture, the government has no intention of developing such a policy anytime soon.

On this front the provincial government has been content to sit back and watch as the best farmland in the province is used for housing, commerce, industry, whatever use an individual municipality deems appropriate. And given that many of the province's major centers were built on good agricultural lands, prime farmland is disappearing at a tremendous rate.

One of the province's primary levers to promoting sustainable development could be through its financial support to municipalities. This is an area where the federal government has been particularly active, ensuring that its gas tax money goes to public transit as opposed to more roads.

Apart from its program to help small municipalities dress up their main streets, the Alberta government has not seen fit to do this. It has preferred to take a hands off approach, letting municipalities spend infrastructure funds wherever they deem appropriate. In some cases this is giving municipalities the easy way out – why try to conserve, improvise or in any way limit sprawl if the province is prepared to pay the freight?

Perhaps most damning is the fact that key provincial figures are largely uninformed about smart growth, have little interest in the subject and hence are doing precious little to promote it. There are no provincial studies or demonstration projects and it's hard to find anyone at the provincial level even talking about it. In one

case, a key provincial minister didn't even have the grace to respond to telephone or e-mail messages on the subject.

If the province isn't even talking about sustainable development, there is little wonder many municipalities assume that it's not a high priority.

B) Absence of Regional Planning

One issue that generated a solid consensus among developers and municipal planners, administrators and elected officials was the need for comprehensive regional planning in our province.

As one planner put it, "All the wise ideas in the world, if they stop at the municipal boundary, won't go very far."

Apart from some scattered regional economic development plans and fringe-area agreements, comprehensive regional plans in Alberta are conspicuous by their absence.

With over 400 individual municipalities all going their own way, even contiguous urban development is next to impossible to achieve, never mind development patterns that complement each other. Complaints over annexation attempts, revenue sharing and incompatible development are growing and will do nothing but get louder until regional planning - removed by the province in the mid-1990s - is reinstated in some fashion.

C) Economy in Overdrive

Nowhere in the province is this better exemplified than in Fort McMurray, where the population grew by 8.5% last year and the average house price has hit \$340,000.

Clearly, this city needs to grow and grow quickly to accommodate the demand for more housing.

This has put the city administration and council under tremendous pressure to approve any and all developments that come before them. Like many of Alberta's high-growth communities, the time and resources to do comprehensive planning is in short supply.

D) Agriculture Community in Distress

Beset by a variety of problems in recent years (BSE disease, drought, poor grain prices), many farmers and ranchers are finding it extremely difficult to stay afloat.

Despite the noble efforts to retain prime agricultural lands by groups like Action for Agriculture, most farmers are quick – sometimes even desperate – to sell their land for development of any type. It has come to the point where much of the prime agricultural land around high-growth Alberta communities is already in the hands of private developers – farmers seen working those fields are commonly doing so under short-term leases.

E) Easy-To-Develop Land

In many respects, the province of Alberta is a developer's paradise. The land around many communities is basically flat, cleared of trees and has ample soil for underground infrastructure.

In most cases there are copious quantities of raw land available. And it is generally uncontaminated, having been used for agricultural production since the arrival of western settlement.

Unlike many other parts of the world, where oceans, mountains and geological conditions have constrained the amount of developable space, Alberta has no such limitations.

All of this has contributed to the availability of low cost land on the periphery of Alberta communities, itself another recipe for urban sprawl.

F) Largely Uninformed Public

The term “smart growth” is still largely unknown in Alberta. As such, it is extremely vulnerable to co-option by various groups for political or commercial purposes.

This has prompted one group, the Chinook Group of the Sierra Club of Canada, to avoid the term altogether and try to focus on urban sprawl, which appears to be more broadly recognized.

Still, it’s an uphill battle in many communities to even discuss sustainability.

Some Alberta communities, like Camrose, pride themselves on having large residential lots and use that fact to help market their community. Many others are more focused on attracting new development than worrying about how sustainable it is or how it might fit with the rest of their community.

A classic example of this is the introduction of big box shopping centers, which are popping up throughout the province.

Most municipalities welcome them with open arms and let them plant themselves at key entrance points to the community. Often little thought is given to their impact on traffic patterns (South Edmonton Common being a classic example) and there is generally little evidence of community planning, as many of these centres are quite isolated, virtually impossible to access by foot and display a common design that has no regard whatsoever to the historical or cultural identity of the host community.

It is also normally a matter of weeks after the arrival of a big box complex that the business and community leaders gather together to see what can be done to save their downtown. Albertans are well behind their counterparts in many other parts of North America when it comes to dealing with this phenomenon.

G) Reticent Municipal Politicians and Key Administrators

Politicians throughout the province commonly make the point that their key responsibility is to fulfill the wishes of their constituents. Hence, if the public is not pushing for sustainability or even expressing an interest, it follows that the subject will be low on the agenda of many people in political office.

This shouldn't excuse politicians from their responsibility of looking ahead and using information that is not commonly available to the public to make decisions that are in the best overall interest of the community. But it happens, nonetheless.

It is also fair to say that some elected people and key administrators are quite offended by the term "smart growth," given that it implies that the design of their community might be a little on the dumb side or not as clever as it might be.

These people played a key role in developing their community and are generally quick to defend it. In some cases they go so far as to deny that urban sprawl even exists in their community, a position that makes the most basic dialogue difficult and near pointless.

There are some exceptions. The Sustainable Calgary Society has included efficient land use as one of the key underpinnings of a healthy society and the Town of Okotoks, as mentioned elsewhere in this report, has done an admirable job in looking at sustainable development. However, these groups are not the norm and without the support of other key players (i.e. the province, neighbouring municipalities, business groups, developers) they have a tough, uphill battle in front of them.

CHAPTER

4

H) Reticent Developers

It can hardly be overstated how influential the development industry is in the planning of Alberta communities.

Many communities rely almost exclusively on developers to initiate land use plans and to conduct associated studies (i.e. traffic, environmental, community impact analysis). As such, most of the information surrounding developments and many of the key, early planning decisions are made by developers, not the municipality.

Developers are also extremely influential at the political level, as they are often the key source of financial support for municipal election campaigns. As the cost of campaigns continue to rise, this influence simply becomes more entrenched.

Hence, if developers are reluctant to embrace smart growth, the host community will have a difficult time making any significant headway.

As in the case of elected officials, developers will change if their clients demand it or if their clients at least show an interest in trying something new. This has been ably demonstrated in the rapid and sometimes dramatic rise in interest to preserve environmentally sensitive areas. The same developers who commonly drained wetlands or razed forests as little as ten years ago are now spending millions trying to create these features in otherwise barren farmland. And it is all because the public has recently decided to pay a hefty premium to live next to green space of one sort or another.

Again, if the public was pushing for smart growth, developers would quickly respond. But it has yet to happen.

To further illustrate this point, many in the development industry – often for good reason – are reluctant to get take on inner city revitalization projects.

As one developer put it, a highly controversial inner city project can not only prove to be expensive with all of the built-in hearings and delays, but it can cause “serious brain damage” and “take years off the life” of the proponent.

Hence, many developers would prefer to focus on suburban development with which they are more familiar and have found to be very profitable in the past.

I) Negative Image of Environmental Groups

A number of people interviewed in this project felt environmental groups like the Sierra Club are far too negative and predictable in the positions they take.

“They can’t be seen as prissy tree huggers,” noted one municipal councillor.

Others thought it would be very difficult to work with the club.

“The mere mention of Sierra Club instills fear in the development community,” lamented one developer.

“We in planning feel attacked,” a municipal planner conceded.

Representatives from various sectors felt the club and other environmental groups could be far more effective if they focused on positive developments and tried to work with other groups in promoting smart growth.

J) Winter Climate

Finally, let’s not overlook ‘old man winter’.

There’s no question that walking and biking can be difficult in winter months, particularly in times of heavy snowfall. And climbing into a warm vehicle is far more attractive than standing at a wind-blown bus stop.

This certainly doesn’t make walking or transit irrelevant, but it does force more attention and resources to be placed on the construction of weather-controlled pedways, bus shelters and bike parking locations.

CHAPTER 5

Steps Toward Smart Growth



Park and Ride has proven popular at the Clareview LRT station in suburban Edmonton. Roughly 35% of the patrons are from outside Edmonton.

Raising Public Awareness

Public support is an indispensable prerequisite for the advancement of smart growth in Alberta.

There is widespread agreement that politicians and developers alike will take action if the public begins to demand change.

The key is to find hot button issues – elements of the smart growth agenda that affect the daily lives of citizens.

One example of this is the health of local neighbourhoods. As demonstrated at the recent SCCPC/EFCL workshop, there is a growing concern about the lack of amenities and contact points in their neighborhood. For example, there are growing concerns about the absence or sudden loss of a neighborhood school. Some people wonder why there are so few things for children to do. Growing crime rates are a concern for everyone.

Consequently, a project that shows the impact smart growth has on neighbourhood design and networks would be one such way to generate public interest.

Another common touch point is traffic congestion. No one likes it. But how many people have come to the realization that a land use pattern which forces everyone to drive long distances for their daily needs makes traffic congestion inevitable? Again, projects which explore this issue present excellent opportunities to raise public awareness about smart growth.

A third area with good potential but perhaps a little more difficult to explore is the impact sprawl has on the cost of urban infrastructure. There is no question that a highly spread-out, low density, homogeneous pattern of community development will cost a great deal more to service than a compact, mixed-use arrangement. But demonstrating this in a comprehensive way would be time-consuming and expensive in itself. And some citizens might not care about the results in any event, assuming that the government – mostly the oil-rich provincial government – is going to pick up the tab for infrastructure regardless.

Other potential talking points exist, but remain further out on the horizon.

For example, issues surrounding energy consumption and greenhouse gas production remain in the wings, waiting for a coherent federal/provincial program to emerge.

And the inevitable rise in fuel prices, which has the potential to dramatically impact community planning in the future, has yet to find an audience.

Both of these subjects have the potential to fully engage the community.

The challenge is to find an avenue through which to get them started.

Long-Term Planning Exercise

Few people have the time in their day to consider the causes of traffic congestion or the forces which drive school closures. Therefore, it is absolutely critical to the advancement of smart growth that communities give their citizens a chance to look toward the future and make some informed choices.

CHAPTER

5

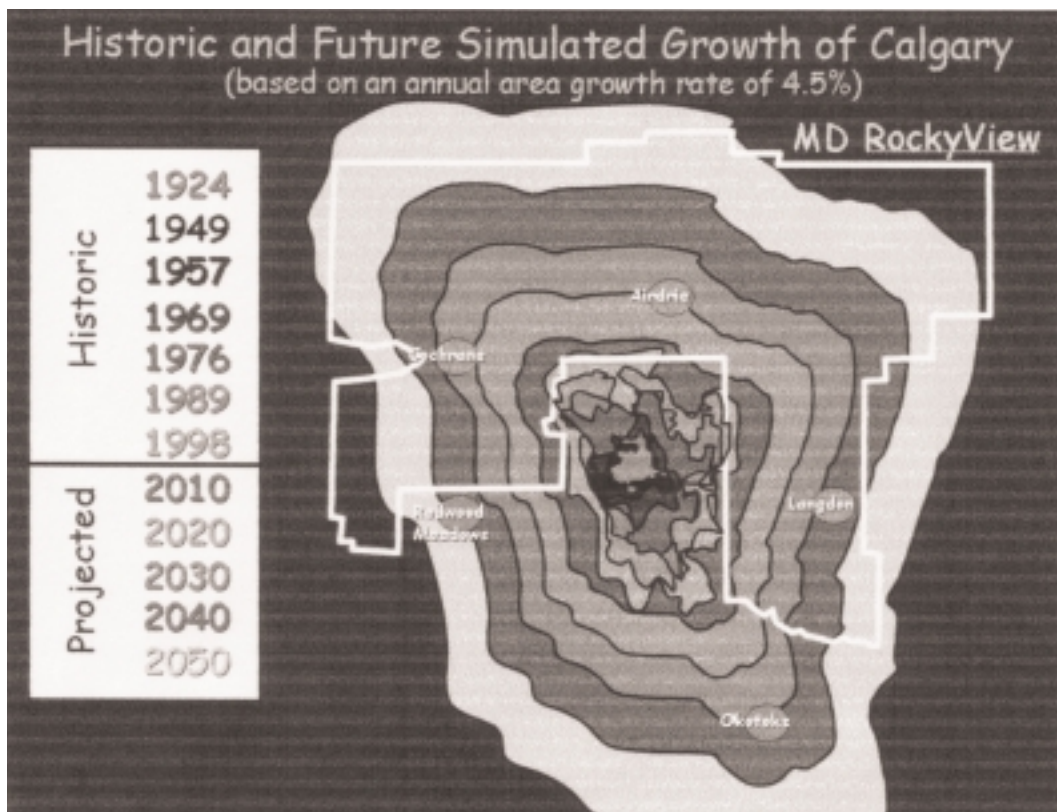
The best way to do this is to launch a long term planning exercise, where citizens – including young people - are invited to help define the community's future.

One of the first steps in this exercise should be to examine the community's growth profile and seek some professional help in modeling the impact growth will have on the community's land

base, traffic counts and financial resources, to name three key elements.

Armed with this information, citizens are in a much better position to make choices.

A good case in point is the development scenarios created by ecologist Brad Stelfox for the City of Calgary. Stelfox demonstrated that if Calgary was to grow at its current rate and style of



Calgary's future growth projected at 4.5% annually.

The above chart, prepared by ecologist Brad Stelfox, shows how Calgary has grown and is slated to grow over the next 45 years.

development, its western edge would abut Kananaskis Provincial Park in 45 years. The city would also extend 20-25 km. north of Airdrie and 10-15 km south of Okotoks.*

It's imperative that citizens be given an opportunity to review the consequences of such growth. Do they want to live in a city that large? What impact will that have on traffic congestion? How much would it cost to service an area like that? How much green space or arable land would be lost? Are there other choices that could be made which would affect the city's size and shape?

* THE CITY OF EDMONTON PLANNING DEPARTMENT COMMISSIONED MR. STELFOX TO DO A SIMILAR STUDY IN 2004. IT HAS CHOSEN TO WAIT UNTIL 2006 TO RELEASE THE RESULTS, COINCIDING WITH AN UPDATE OF ITS MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

In order to deal with these issues and others, the City of Calgary has launched Imagine Calgary, a \$2.2 million, two-year planning exercise. It features an advisory group formed by the mayor, a round table of councillors, developers and citizens, 8-10 sub-committees and workshops open to the general public.

Initially, the plan contemplates a 100-year planning horizon. The intention is to first set long-term goals and values, from which shorter-term projects and programs will be built.

In Okotoks the town councillors went so far as to take their sustainable development survey door to door. The result was a plan with significant community support where citizens continually hold the politicians feet to the fire to accomplish the established goals.

Similar stories are told elsewhere – Ottawa and Chicago are two good examples – where elected people and business representatives are quick to extol the importance of a long-term plan developed by members of the community.

Put simply, the public will be quick to support and defend a future they help define.

Promotion of Public Transit

Public transit, particularly high speed bus or LRT lines between high-density activity centers, is a far more effective way to move people and promote the smart growth agenda than relying exclusively on the automobile.

The challenge for smaller municipalities without transit is to develop a land use plan with transit in mind, including corridors for future high-speed routes.

The challenge for large municipalities is to make the transit system attractive to the general public. Again, LRT and/or Bus Rapid Transit systems are instrumental to this process, given the speed, comfort and convenience they provide.

Regular bus service faces a variety of difficult challenges, but can be much more successful if linked into a high-speed system and enhanced with climate-controlled shelters and well-marketed schedule information.

CHAPTER

5

Measurement Tools

The smart growth agenda could benefit tremendously through the development of commonly understood measurement tools.

For example, Portland has determined that it wants to lower the amount of time per day people spend in cars, as well as the daily distance they drive. These tools would be very helpful in Canada, particularly if acceptable standards or targets could be set for communities of different sizes.

Similarly, there seems to be wide variance as the number of dwelling units per acre required to support efficient public transit. Some sources suggest 10-12 units/acre, others say it's closer to 20 units/acre – again some clarity would be helpful.

And what about walkability standards? Okotoks for example wants to ensure that no one has to walk for more than 20 minutes from their home to shopping or for more than 15 minutes to get to a recreational facility. Are these appropriate targets?

Clearly, it would help if an umbrella organization, perhaps like Smart Growth Canada or CMHC, attempted to establish some appropriate standards.

Government Buy-In

Municipal Support

"How many municipalities, out of Canada's 5,600, have really thought about sustainability? Maybe 100, 10 of which are on the cutting edge,"

INFRASTRUCTURE MINISTER
JOHN GODFREY, SPEAKING AT
A SMART GROWTH CANADA
CONFERENCE, MARCH 11, 2005.

In keeping with Minister Godfrey's comment, there's no question that Alberta municipalities could be doing more.

For example, some are almost entirely dependent on the initiatives brought forward by private developers. On this point, the City of Red Deer seems to have struck a comfortable balance by seeking a 25/75 split in residential lot development between itself and private developers. This financial commitment has helped give the community a seat at the table when plans are first being established.

Communities could also kick start inner-city revitalization by directly investing in projects, as Strathcona County is doing with its Centre in the Park project and the City of Edmonton is poised to do in the Fort Road business area.

Financial incentives can play a positive role. Edmonton, as an example, helped spark the construction of new housing downtown through a cash grant of \$4,500 for each unit. Portland, meanwhile, has put together a successful tax-shielding program for the development of high-density housing near transit stations.

More effort needs to be placed on redeveloping brownfields. Tax shielding programs to encourage the rehabilitation of environmentally-contaminated land have worked well in other parts of Canada and could easily be replicated in Alberta.

Zoning regulations are far too restrictive. Mixed-use development, one of the key underpinnings of smart growth, is flat out prohibited in many zoning categories. Built form should be the focus of attention, not the number of units or whether it is rented or not. And more user-friendly mechanisms need to be found to accommodate innovative developments.

Parking requirements can be eased in areas where public transit is good and it is easy to walk from store to store. And measures to encourage underground or above-ground parking would go a long way to increasing the vitality of shopping districts, particularly in the downtown.

Disincentives need to be removed, such as the 20% mill rate premium paid by multi-family developments in the City of Edmonton.

Municipalities could assign additional staff resources to work with developers on difficult revitalization projects. Time is money, and much more could be done to help property owners facing significant development constraints.

Similarly, development fees could be waived in return for positive design elements, such as buildings that incorporate transit shelters or weather-protected public walkways.

And finally, municipalities could do much more to promote positive projects. What is wrong with a community giving an award to an innovative design or a developer who comes up with a more sustainable neighborhood concept? If municipalities believe in smart growth, why not talk about it?

Provincial Support

As detailed earlier in this report, there is no shortage of room for improvement by the provincial government.

Preparation of a provincial land use plan would be an excellent start, to help ensure efficient transportation networks (particularly rail) and eliminate haphazard development.

Efforts to restore regional planning would be warmly received and go a long way to encouraging sustainable development. To pretend that regional planning is a strictly a municipal issue, as some in the provincial government like to suggest, is nothing more than a cynical cop-out, as municipalities neither have the legislation nor the resources to prepare regional plans of any consequence.

Some strategy - any strategy - to protect prime agricultural land or at least help farm operations co-exist with municipal development would be a breath of fresh air.

The province could also wield significant leverage through its substantial fiscal resources. Simply asking municipalities to explore ways to cut their infrastructure costs, in order to qualify for provincial funding, would be a welcome start.

Studies, demonstration projects, even showing some leadership by discussing sustainable land use could pay handsome dividends. Given the tremendous influence the province has in municipal affairs all it has to do is show some interest and many municipalities will quickly follow suit.

Federal Support

Given the distance between federal and municipal affairs, it is to the federal government's credit that it has taken the sustainability debate as far as it has.

As mentioned previously, the federal gas tax program is already producing good results.

For example, one day after this program was detailed in the federal budget the City of Edmonton responded by committing to a major extension of its LRT network.

Similarly, the federal Green Fund is quickly becoming the program of choice for a wide variety of sustainability initiatives.

And Crown agencies, like CMHC, have recently joined the fray by producing a sustainable community booklet, complete with a checklist of items it would like to see included in all neighborhood development.

One area that has yet to unfold is the federal government's strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which could have

significant impacts on land use planning. However, most of the government's thrust on that front has yet to materialize.

School Board Support

Schools play a huge role in developing and maintaining community networks, yet the school boards seem largely disconnected from the whole debate about urban sustainability.

Confronted by financial pressures and various provincial policies, the boards have often found themselves faced with the prospect of closing a school in a neighborhood that is in desperate need of revitalization. Unfortunately, they have generally been abandoned by other orders of government in these situations.

On another front, one civic administrator wondered why some of the school buses couldn't be used to transport other people, like seniors, during off-peak hours? A good question, which again makes the case for better intergovernmental planning.

Both of these examples further underline why community-wide planning exercises, followed by concrete programs, are essential if smart growth is ever to take hold.

Non-Profit Sector Support

As documented earlier, many non-profit groups are already exploring the importance of sustainable land use development practices.

The problem here is that individually they have very limited clout and public visibility. The challenge is to somehow bring them together.

For example, crime prevention groups, social development agencies, environmental groups, public health agencies, university design departments - to name a few - are all beginning to talk about community design and its impact on the health and safety of its citizens.

Unfortunately, no one has come forward to date to try to coordinate these efforts.

The message these groups could bring forward would be hugely powerful if their work was somehow connected and a joint public profile created.

CHAPTER 6

Recommendations to The Sierra Club of Canada Prairie Chapter (SCCPC)



Northeast Edmonton's Poplar Lake, once destined for removal, has become a good example of how development plans can change when the public shows an interest.

#1 The SCCPC should focus on raising public awareness about the importance of sustainable development and how unchecked urban sprawl will negatively affect our quality of life.

As mentioned earlier in the report, little will happen at the political level or through the private development industry if the public is not demanding change. Hence, it is critical that the general public be fully engaged.

In order to accomplish this, the club would be well advised to begin by pursuing some short-term, bite-sized projects of interest to the general public.

One such project would be to examine Edmonton's neighbourhoods, both old and new, with the goal of improving the way they function. This would include an analysis of neighbourhood design, amenities and social networks.

A second example would be a project that examines traffic congestion, its causes and potential solutions.

In each of these cases, it would be important to seek out other agencies and private groups, including land developers, that would be interested in joining the exercise. Once a list of partners has been identified, the group could ask the city to help resource the exercise and ask other funders for assistance.

#2 Another recommended action would be to urge municipal governments to undertake long term planning exercises. Communities should be encouraged to look ahead at least 20 years and involve their citizens in an exercise that defines the future of their community.

This step alone would inevitably lead communities into the entire smart growth debate without the SCCPC having to say another word.

#3 Exploring infrastructure costs associated with sprawl is another area in which the club could grab the public's attention. However, this is a big issue that would take a good deal of resources to properly explore. It would also be better if a larger organization, such as the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association or the Federation of Canadian Municipalities could be convinced to take this on.

#4 The SCCPC, perhaps through its national office, should check to see the degree to which smart growth principles and sustainable land use practices generally have been considered by the federal government in its greenhouse gas reduction program. This is an area that has huge potential if the right buttons can be pushed.

Along with this initiative, the club should encourage Climate Change Central to consider sustainable land use as one of its core objectives and see what projects it might be interested in jointly pursuing.

#5 Who is looking at rising fuel costs and the impact this will eventually have on our society? Again, this is something the club could encourage its national arm to explore, with federal agencies, energy review boards and petroleum producing associations.

#6 Better tools are needed to measure and describe progressive land use patterns. For example, how many housing units per acre are needed to support efficient public transit? How far can people be expected to walk to access basic services? How much time spent driving or distance traveled each day is reasonable?

The SCCPC needs to research the status of a variety of smart growth measurement tools and once they have been established, develop promotional strategies around them.

#7 The SCCPC needs to develop an awards program, perhaps in conjunction with others, to recognize positive initiatives and projects. This would include exercises by municipalities and developers alike.

For example, one award could focus on attractive, street oriented, mixed use developments. Another might feature walkable neighbourhoods. Still another might highlight a re-used brownfield site. The emphasis here should be on things people can see, feel and touch, as opposed to general policies or programs. The public needs to see real, live examples of good developments and lots of them.

#8 The SCCPC should encourage the provincial government to develop a provincial land use strategy, much as it recently did with water. This would include a plan to reinstate regional planning.

The club should also pursue this with Progressive Conservative leadership candidates who are still fleshing out their political platforms. And the club should certainly approach the opposition parties, each of whom could help advance the case for smart growth.

#9 The SCCPC should also strive to maintain contact and seek partnership opportunities with others working in the field. For example, both CMHC and the Green Building Council (LEEDS) are looking at sustainable neighbourhood design. The Chinook Institute for Community Stewardship is putting together an Alberta Open Spaces Toolkit, focusing on development in rural areas. The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association is planning a major review of urban sustainability and the Sierra Club's Chinook Group is launching a significant anti-sprawl campaign. Perhaps a good first step would be to ask a representative of these groups to speak at a club outreach event.

#10 The SCCPC needs to stay in touch and up to date with other leading smart growth agencies, such as Smart Growth B.C. and Smart Growth Canada. A good deal of information can be obtained from these groups and partnership opportunities will undoubtedly surface from time to time.

#11 The SCCPC needs to continually work with the media. It needs to become recognized as the go-to agency on any story related to smart growth or urban sprawl.

#12 The SCCPC should view creation of a smart growth manual as a low priority at this time, perhaps worthy of review in a few years. As stated elsewhere, the term "Smart Growth" and what it stands for is not widely understood in our province. As such, there would be little demand for such a document at this point, hardly justifying the significant resources required to produce it.

In the meantime, organizations such as Smart Growth B.C. and the Federation of Ontario Naturalists have produced manuals that contain significant amounts of material applicable to Alberta.

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and suggestions
during interviews
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- 7) Jim Visser, Legacy Lands Society

Sierra Club (Chinook Chapter)

- 1) Brian Pincott, President

City of Edmonton

- 1) Marianne McConnell/Boehm, Senior Planner
- 2) Marlene Exner, Senior Planner *
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- 3) Ted Gillespie, City Engineer
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* TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

City of Red Deer

- 1) Mayor Morris Flewwelling
- 2) Councillor Larry Pimm
- 3) Councillor Frank Wong
- 4) Councillor Cindy Jefferies
- 5) Councillor Lorna Watkinson-Zimmer
- 6) Councillor Lynne Mulder
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- 9) Bryon Jeffers, Director of Development Services
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Strathcona County

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- 2) Rudy Koop, Project Manager, Centre in the Park
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- 4) Gerry Gabinet, Manager, Economic Development, Tourism

Town of Drayton Valley

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- 2) Nesen Naidoo, Director of Economic Development

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* TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

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Province of Alberta

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- 5) Greg Christensen, President, Christensen Developments Ltd.
- 6) Trent Harder, President, Highland West

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- 1) Brad Stelfox, landscape ecologist, Forem Technologies
- 2) Dave Reynolds, environmental consultant, Discovery Environmental *

* TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

Healthy Neighbourhood Workshop

APPENDIX

(CO-SPONSORED BY THE SCCPC AND EFCL)

Purpose

The purpose of the Healthy Neighbourhoods Workshop was to hear what Edmonton agency representatives had to say about the state of the city's neighbourhoods. For example, did the participants feel they were great places to live? Could they be better? Are they showing signs of decline?

Agency representatives were also to be asked about steps that could be taken, if needed, to improve the health of our city's neighbourhoods.

Process

Invitations were sent to approximately 25 agencies in Edmonton, asking them to send a representative to the workshop. In some cases the invitations was sent to a contact known to the SCCPC or EFCL. In other instances it was simply sent to the organization.

Altogether, 13 people attended the workshop. Five were from the EFCL (either board, committee or league members) while the other eight represented different Edmonton agencies or organizations (see the following list).

The session was jointly facilitated by Allan Bolstad, Smart Growth Project Coordinator for the SCCPC and Felix Horne, Community Planning Advisor for the EFCL.

APPENDIX

People In Attendance

- 1) John Doyle, Greater Windermere Community League
- 2) Greg Gaylard, Greater Windermere Community League
- 3) Darryl Muller, City of Edmonton
- 4) John Spence, University of Alberta P.E. Department
- 5) Ron Kuban, Edmonton Regional Crime Prevention Network
- 6) Don Grimble, Safer Cities Advisory Committee
- 7) Dawn Banner, Edmonton Block Parents Society
- 8) Eric Gormley, Trails Advisory Committee
- 9) Tracy Bader, Neighbourhood Watch
- 10) Josh Marko, Capital Health Authority
- 11) Rocky Feroer, EFCL board member
- 12) Edo Nyland, EFCL board member
- 13) Ben Henderson, EFCL planning and development committee

Workshop Agenda

Workshop participants were first asked to identify the key elements that underpin a healthy neighbourhood. To help the discussion, they were asked to identify important design elements they would like to see in a neighbourhood, followed by local amenities and finally social networks.

Once this had been completed, participants were asked to review the state of Edmonton's neighbourhoods against this criteria, beginning with the city's mature neighbourhoods. A discussion of the city's newer neighbourhoods, including those still in the planning stages, soon followed.

The workshop concluded with a discussion of the steps that could be taken to improve the health of neighbourhoods in the city.

Discussion Highlights

The following elements were identified as key components of a healthy neighbourhood.

A) Design Elements

- 1) Public Spaces
- 2) Interaction opportunities with neighbours
- 3) Identity/Sense of Place
- 4) Public Transit
- 5) Traffic Calming Measures
- 6) Impediments to Traffic Shortcutting
- 7) Walkways/Bikeways
- 8) Housing that appeals to varied demographics (young/old)
- 9) People scale development rather than car scale
- 10) Neighbourhood Commercial Spaces

B) Amenities

- 1) School
- 2) Coffee Shop/Restaurant
- 3) Grocery Store
- 4) Community Centre
- 5) Medical Facility (i.e. Medicentre)
- 6) Sports/recreation facilities
- 7) Sidewalks/Paths/Trails
- 8) Green Space (Public and Private)
- 9) Libraries
- 10) Effective Lighting
- 11) Well-kept yards
- 12) Creative Housing Mix

C) Social Networks

- 1) Affordability... facilities, programs, that allow everyone to take part
- 2) Good communication network, within community and between neighbouring communities (newsletter, etc.)
- 3) Positive relationships between neighbourhoods
- 4) Sense of ownership by area residents
- 5) Grassroots community organizing
- 6) Good interaction and relationships between neighbours
- 7) Neighbourhood events
- 8) Busy streets! Need people to be visible, doing various activities.
- 9) Community focal points/meeting places
- 10) Police Presence. Good relationship with residents
- 11) Community Policing Network
- 12) Activities for different age groups (kids, youth, seniors)
- 13) Unstructured play opportunities for kids

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Concerns Expressed:

a) About mature neighbourhoods

- 1) Losing neighbourhood commercial space
- 2) Arterial traffic arteries (dividing neighbourhoods and bringing large amounts of noisy, unsafe traffic into the area)
- 3) Redevelopment that is incompatible to the community
- 4) Crumbing infrastructure
- 5) School closures
- 6) Declining population/changing demographics
- 7) Unkept, unsightly properties
- 8) Open School Boundaries – Few children go to school locally
- 9) Safe streets
- 10) Less social cohesion at the local school
- 11) Places of assembly changing – neighbourhood meeting places being replaced by city-wide facilities
- 12) Definition of community changing/more interest based than geographic

b) About new neighbourhoods

- 1) Lack of implementation (plans not materializing)
- 2) Lack of identity
- 3) Needs to be more incentives/mechanisms for neighbours to organize
- 4) Lack of enforcement of design standards
- 5) Too much developer driven (little imagination)
- 6) Lack of proper design tools, planning
- 7) Environmental concerns – pesticides, alternative energy, green design
- 8) Lack of “big picture planning”
- 9) Poor coordination between jurisdictions (city promises a bridge that the province never agrees to fund)
- 10) Overcrowding, zero lot lines
- 11) Need more mixed use. Uses overly separated.

What Needs To Happen?

- 1) Better planning. Need to be proactive
- 2) Need to review past studies (on neighbourhoods)
- 3) Work with the University of Alberta in researching this matter
- 4) Institutions, Design Schools, Research Bodies
need to push this agenda
- 5) Need to get the community and citizens involved early on in decisions that affect their area
- 6) Changes need to be pursued through the Municipal Development Plan review.
- 7) Adjacent communities need to be consulted at the conceptual planning stage for new areas.

APPENDIX

Summary

Workshop participants expressed a number of concerns about the state of Edmonton's neighbourhoods, both old and new, that need to be addressed.

Many of these concerns focused around the decline in interaction between neighbours, as community meeting places such as schools and shops were either disappearing or falling into disuse in older areas and never materializing in new neighbourhoods.

As a result, community residents are not getting to know each other like they did, resulting in fewer friendships, fewer local activities, less community pride and growing crime rates.

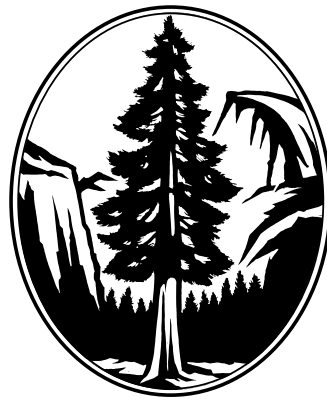
Combine this with growing traffic, crumbling infrastructure and general shortage of amenities and Edmonton's neighbourhoods, both old and new, are steadily becoming less healthy places to live.

Workshop participants encouraged the organizers (EFCL/Sierra Club) to approach the city and other agencies to address this situation, keeping in mind that some general research has already been done in this area and should be incorporated into any new project.

About the Sierra Club

The **Sierra Club** was founded in 1892 by naturalist John Muir in order to protect the wilderness of the Sierra Nevada.

Sierra Club Canada-Prairie Chapter was founded in 1995 and works with the national office, other provincial chapters and **Sierra Club U.S.** on environmental issues. Current campaigns include *Join the Growing Movement – Pesticide Free Yards, Steer Clear – Go Your Own Way, Environmental 911* and *Reduce Vehicle Idling*.



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