

Partners for Climate Protection

Six Steps to a Sustainable Community:

A Guide to Local Action Planning





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What is local action planning?

If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people.
— Chinese proverb

Local action planning is the process of creating a strategic document that outlines specifically how your municipality will achieve a selected greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction target. The resulting document, called a local action plan (LAP),¹ is the third milestone in the Partners for Climate Protection (PCP) program.

Partners for Climate Protection

The Partners for Climate Protection² (PCP) program is a network of more than 170 Canadian municipal governments that are committed to reducing GHGs and acting on climate change. The five-milestone framework provided by PCP supports Canadian municipal governments as they work to make communities more sustainable by:

- reducing GHG emissions from municipal operations by 20 per cent as compared with 2000 levels;
- reducing community-wide GHG emissions by at least six per cent as compared with 2000 levels; and
- reaching these targets within 10 years of committing to GHG reductions.

PCP Milestones

Milestone One:	Create a GHG emissions inventory and forecast
Milestone Two:	Set an emissions reductions target
Milestone Three:	Develop a local action plan
Milestone Four:	Implement the local action plan or a set of activities
Milestone Five:	Monitor progress and reporting results

The five milestones are typically completed in numeric order so that knowledge is built systematically. However, some municipalities choose to move immediately into the third milestone — developing a local action plan — so that they can start reducing GHG emissions right away.

1 An LAP is not the same as an integrated community sustainability plan (ICSP). An ICSP is a high-level planning document that a municipality uses to incorporate environmental, social, cultural and economic considerations into all of its decision-making. Some of the municipalities profiled later in this guide have moved beyond the LAP and are now working on an ICSP.

2 For details see the FCM Green Municipal Fund website at <www.fcm.ca/gmf>.

Whichever way your community chooses to complete the milestones, the third milestone is the platform upon which municipalities build sustainability into their municipal operations and the community as a whole.

Content of the LAP

Your municipality's LAP guides the reduction in GHG emissions in all sectors of the community. It includes short-, medium- and long-term objectives and lists the local actions that the municipality and the community can take to reduce GHG emissions.

But reducing emissions is just one of many local concerns. Maintaining and improving air, water and soil quality; reducing energy costs; maintaining economic stability; and addressing social issues are all important challenges that, when met, contribute to a community's quality of life. An LAP can help to address all of those concerns. In essence, an LAP sets forth a vision for a community and provides a road map on how to get there.

Many communities develop two separate LAPs — one for municipal operations and one for the community as a whole. Although the reduction potential from the community is significantly greater than that from municipal operations, PCP encourages municipal governments to develop and implement a plan for municipal operations first. By going first, the municipality can demonstrate leadership and provide a positive example for the community to follow. Also, the experience gained in making the smaller municipal LAP can then be applied to the community-wide LAP, which is typically more complex to develop and implement, requiring input and coordination from many stakeholders, such as citizens' groups, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Whether municipal or community-wide, an LAP generally includes:

- a summary of baseline emissions forecasts and targets;
- a set of existing and proposed actions to reduce emissions;
- implementation strategies, including the resources involved; and
- input from stakeholders.

Using this guide

This guide covers the development of a community-wide local action plan (LAP), that is, Milestone Three in the PCP program. The information provided here also applies to the development of an LAP for a corporation or similar organization — although with some minor procedural differences. (For example, internal working group meetings are held instead of public consultations.)

The step-by-step overview in the next section, *Begin planning*, shows how an LAP is developed. All of the steps are illustrated with examples from planning undertaken by PCP members. The subsequent section, *Sustainability Snapshots*, profiles 11 communities at various stages of the LAP process. All but one are PCP members. The remaining sections offer insights, lessons learned and additional resources to guide your municipality as it designs its own LAP.

Begin planning

Generally speaking, PCP members begin the LAP process once they have completed a GHG emissions inventory and an action plan for municipal operations. If this is the case for your community, some information will already have been gathered:

- the major GHG-emitting sectors in the community
- the major stakeholders
- the available internal capacity
- an understanding of local priorities

But even in the absence of an emissions inventory and municipal plan, development of your LAP can begin.

In general, municipalities follow six key steps when developing a community LAP.

Step One: Identify key stakeholders and funding

A successful LAP fosters a sense of community ownership by recognizing many different community interests. Therefore, at the beginning of the planning process, municipal governments must bring together and obtain the support of as wide a range of stakeholders as possible.



Steps to developing an LAP:



Step One: Identify the key stakeholders and sources of funding

Step Two: Form steering committees and working groups

Step Three: Develop the plan

Step Four: Hold public consultations

Step Five: Implement the plan

Step Six: Evaluate and monitor the plan

Finding the stakeholders

Stakeholders can include representatives from:

- local business and industry, including industry associations, business improvement associations, unions, financial institutions, and regional economic development authorities, among others;
- utility companies;
- transit authorities;
- educational institutions (primary, secondary and post-secondary schools, trade colleges, and so on);
- community and non-governmental organizations;
- local media; and
- interested residents.

Target messages

The City of Sudbury piqued stakeholder interest by tailoring the initial invitations to the values or interests of the various groups being asked to participate. For example, the first presentation to the Sudbury Chamber of Commerce focused on the economic benefits of an LAP for the business community.

Find the right people

The City of Vancouver chose its Cool Vancouver task force members carefully and found that members not only provided input into the process, but also acted as “portals” into their respective organizations. Municipal staff thus had access to a vital resource when they needed to discuss issues or ideas with a particular stakeholder organization.

Municipal staff can invite the identified organizations to participate in discussions of ideas and priorities, or to sit on a steering committee that will guide the plan’s development, or both. A direct invitation from a senior manager or local councillor will often elicit a better response from stakeholders.

Financing the LAP

If municipal council has not already designated funds for developing the LAP, identifying funding sources will be a priority. Potential sources include municipal operating or departmental funds, stakeholder membership fees (e.g. money collected from participants in the plan that receive services from the organizers), and grants from provincial/territorial, federal or municipal agencies.

Seek funding

The City of Sorel-Tracy and the Province of Québec’s Fonds d’action québécois pour le développement durable³ contributed \$40,000 and \$150,000 respectively to develop and implement its Local Agenda 21 (LA21) plan.

3 For more information, visit Développement durable, Environnement et Parcs, Fonds d’action québécois pour le développement durable (FAQDD), at <www.menv.gouv.qc.ca/developpement/faqdd/index.htm>.

Take advantage of FCM's Green Municipal Fund

Many of the communities profiled in this guide applied for and received grants from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' Green Municipal Fund™ (GMF) to develop their plans. GMF offers financial assistance (grants of up to 50 per cent of costs, to a maximum of \$350,000) to municipalities that wish to develop sustainable community plans. Grant support can be provided for the completion of PCP Milestones Two and Three, and for the implementation plan required to achieve Milestone Four when completed as part of a local action plan. Grants and loans from GMF are also available to support the implementation of capital projects at Milestone Four. The Town of Collingwood, for example, used part of its GMF grant to hire an environmental consultant. The consultant will help to develop the sustainability plan for the town and for three other municipalities involved.

If your municipality offers certain environmental services — residential home energy audits being one example — it may be able to use a portion of the revenue so generated to cover the expenses associated with sustainability planning.

Seek revenue

The Severn Sound Environmental Association (SSEA) recovers revenue from projects carried out by the SSEA for its partners and, sometimes, for third parties. The SSEA is also financed by private and corporate donations and by the nine municipal governments in the region that are involved in developing the LAP. This funding is based on a percentage of assessed properties and values in each participating municipality.

Invest savings

The City of Edmonton initially invested \$5 million in an energy management revolving fund to pay for energy-efficiency upgrades to its infrastructure. As operating costs decline through lower use of energy, the savings replenish the fund, which has now grown to \$30 million.

Step Two: Form a steering committee and working groups

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LAPs are often developed by a dedicated group — a steering committee — made up of municipal staff and community members.

A major benefit of having a steering committee — rather than council members or municipal staff solely — develop the LAP is that political risk can be reduced. Some of the ideas generated during the planning process may be controversial or may require large amounts of financial or human resources. These ideas may often be more acceptable to the community if suggested by a neutral steering committee consisting of a variety of community stakeholders.

It is recommended that at least one elected official serve on the steering committee to act as a liaison between the group and municipal council.

The steering committee can include any interested stakeholders. Staff members should keep in touch with those who ultimately choose not to take part. These outside stakeholders may be willing to act as a “sounding board” for the ideas and initiatives brought forward throughout the process.

Build support through savings

One reason that political support for Sudbury’s LAP was obtained so early in the process was the discovery that the community was spending close to \$400 million annually on energy costs. Energy-efficiency ideas generated by the steering committee have helped save the city about \$1 million each year in energy costs.

Match councillors with citizens

In Sudbury, five of 12 councillors volunteered to sit on the EarthCare steering committee. The Town of Collingwood’s Sustainability Committee includes councillors and local residents; it is chaired by the director of a well-respected local environmental organization.

What does the steering committee do?

A steering committee’s functions can include:

- identifying the community’s vision, mission statement, goals and objectives;
- identifying community priorities and needs;
- assessing the quantity of resources available (human, financial, etc.) and potential partners;
- preparing a draft list of potential short-, medium- and long-term actions;
- developing a draft implementation plan; and
- monitoring and evaluating individual projects and periodically reviewing the entire plan.

Identifying a community’s vision can be a lengthy process, but it is a valuable tool. It may help in consolidating the opinions and perspectives of the group or in clearing up any miscommunications or misconceptions. A vision statement can be a handy reference at an early stage, but some communities find that their ultimate vision statement does not become clear until the steering committee is further along in the planning process.

Staff may already have identified some community priorities in the normal course of business, through the inventory process in PCP Milestone One, and through the initial

Establish working groups

The City of Regina established residential, transportation, education & communication, and commercial/industrial working groups, allowing for specialization in particular areas.



Members of Regina’s Green Ribbon Committee meet to discuss the issues (Photo: City of Regina).

stakeholder discussions. It may be useful to separate these priorities into individual working groups. Examples include:

- residential
- business/commercial/industrial/institutional
- transportation
- green space/agriculture
- air and water quality
- communications
- business plan development

Working groups should meet regularly to discuss ideas developed, progress made, and how those ideas and related plans may affect other working groups and, ultimately, the community.

Step Three: Develop the LAP



Before developing the draft LAP, the steering committee should have a good understanding of the initiatives that are already underway within the community. These could be initiatives that the municipality itself has undertaken, programs offered by other levels of government or by non-governmental organizations, or programs from neighbouring municipalities.

Create a project inventory

By creating an inventory of existing projects, the steering committee can avoid “reinventing the wheel” — reproducing initiatives already in operation. An inventory will also highlight initiatives that have worked or failed to work in the past, and the potential for arranging partnerships with other organizations.

Municipal staff members — regardless of whether they sit on the steering committee — are often prime sources of information about what is already happening in the community; they will also be aware of bylaws, resolutions or policies that may affect proposed projects.

Use existing resources

The City of Edmonton’s Carbon Dioxide Reduction Edmonton (CO₂RE) program used statistics already available from the EnerGuide for Houses program (replaced by the ecoENERGY⁴ program) managed by Natural Resources Canada to develop its Home\$avers residential energy-efficiency program. Statistics from 4,000 area homes gave organizers an understanding of energy trends and usage, average home age and major energy-efficiency challenges, all of which helped them to craft communications material specific to Edmonton homeowners.

4 For more information, see ecoENERGY at <www.ecoaction.gc.ca>.

Set goals and objectives

Now it's time to choose the goals and objectives that new initiatives are expected to meet and to choose mechanisms that will help reach those goals and objectives:

- Overall goal for GHG reductions in the community
- Individual projects to be implemented
- Resources needed for each project (financial, administrative, and so on), including a draft budget and a timeline
- Targets for each project
- People who will be responsible for carrying out the project
- How each project will be evaluated and monitored

Categorize initiatives

With both the existing project inventory and a list of proposed initiatives in hand, the steering committee can begin to categorize the proposed initiatives by the resources required or the ease or difficulty of achieving each one. By implementing an easy project first, and succeeding at it, the steering committee can gain a sense of accomplishment that will help keep their interest in the community's long-term goals.

Target success

EcoPerth identified four key factors in each of its successful initiatives:

1. It was doable with the available resources, and it had a good likelihood of success.
2. It had a champion to initiate the project and keep it moving.
3. It had direct economic benefits with a measurable payback.
4. It had a high profile, with visibility in the community, and an increasing awareness of the initiative, the issue and the need to act.

EcoPerth says that the most successful activities might not at first seem the most obvious. For instance, one of its most successful initiatives has been Local Flavour, a program that promotes local food production and consumption. Local Flavour brings local growers and consumers together in food stores, restaurants, bakeries and farmers' markets. The initiative ties several issues into one tidy package: it keeps local dollars within the community, promotes healthy nutrition, creates a sense of community pride and reduces the emissions associated with the transportation of food.



EcoPerth's Local Flavour campaign is one of its most successful programs (Photo: EcoPerth).

Draft the LAP

Most LAPs include the following information:

- The community's vision.
- Contextual information on unique community issues, or background information on environmental or climate change issues and their expected effects on the community.
- Baseline information (energy use, GHG emissions, demographic information, and so on).
- The plan's overall objectives.
- A list of initiatives and proposed new bylaws or policies, each with its own objectives, goals, resources required, implementation strategy, and so on. The list is typically grouped by issue (e.g. transportation, waste management, water) or by working group categories (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial).
- An implementation schedule that outlines timing and staffing; this schedule will greatly assist the task of assessing implementation (PCP Milestone Four).
- An evaluation and monitoring plan for each project (PCP Milestone Five).

For detailed information and a template for completing a GHG reduction plan, download a copy of the PCP Model Climate Change Action Plan from www.fcm.ca/gmf.

Step Four: Hold public consultations

As noted in Step One, LAPs are often more successful when the public feels a sense of ownership in the process and when the final action plan respects and considers their views and opinions. Consulting with the public is therefore a key step in preparing a successful LAP.



Once a list of priority initiatives has been developed (Step Three), the steering committee may wish to consult with the larger “sounding board” of key stakeholders (identified in Step One) before going to the general public.

Consultations can be divided by working group topic (identified in Step Two) or can consider the draft plan as a whole. In either case, members of the public should be given several opportunities to comment on the various initiatives and their proposed implementation.

Quite often, communities want to jump in and “do it all.” The municipal government that can start all of its initiatives right away is rare; it is far more common for the municipality not to know which initiatives to tackle first. Providing a mix of short-, medium-, and long-term projects for public consultation can often help to prioritize a long list into a handful of key action items.

The feedback provided during the period of public comment should be incorporated into the final version of the LAP. The plan can then be put before council for approval (if required), and implementation can begin.

Seek reactions

The City of Greater Sudbury invited key stakeholders and interested residents to an open forum to comment on the priorities identified by each of the working groups. The resulting feedback was then incorporated into an executive summary of the LAP that was subsequently presented to council.

Consult widely

The City of Sorel-Tracy held two full public consultations — together with more informal consultations through local print media, radio programs and the municipality’s website — the first to ensure that the plan reflected the community’s needs, and a second before plan implementation began. The initial meeting in February 2007 drew more than 300 participants.

Public engagement strategies

The Ontario Planning Journal (<www.ontarioplanners.on.ca/content/journal/OPJournal.asp>) offers several points that communities should consider before undertaking a public consultation process:

- The public engagement process is an invaluable tool that delivers a more credible, informed planning process.
- Determine the notification methods that work best in your community (e.g. e-mail, mail, newspaper or radio advertisements, and so on).
- Avoid technical or jargon-laden language during the public engagement process. Instead, simplify the messages to reach a wider audience.
- Information may need to be presented in more than one language. Your community may also want to make arrangements for residents with visual or hearing impairments. Local groups that offer services for distinct cultural groups, and associations that work for people with disabilities can often be good allies.
- Acknowledge the public’s input in a timely fashion. Residents who have taken the time to participate in the process should not have to wait months (or longer) to know how their views and comments have been used. Updates can be provided to the public in many forms; publicly available staff reports and broadcast e-mail messages to participants are just two examples.
- Consider community-based social marketing (CBSM) techniques. CBSM emphasizes direct contact between community members and the removal of structural barriers. Research suggests that such approaches are more likely to bring about behaviour change. More information on CBSM can be found in the Lessons Learned section of this guide.

Tailor engagement

Wolfville used a “community circles” model to facilitate community discussion and to begin raising awareness of sustainability issues in general. About 25 community circles, representing about 200 residents, were hosted for clubs, day care centres, associations and neighbourhoods. During the community circles, participants were asked to provide basic demographic information and specific comments on the recommendations that the task force had developed for building a sustainable Wolfville.

- Use a variety of public participation tactics. A combination of open houses, workshops, online forums and surveys will reach a wider audience and give your municipality a broader perspective on community concerns and the behaviours that residents may be willing to change.

Customizing public engagement

Municipal governments often opt for the open house model in seeking public input. However, a growing number of municipalities are finding that this strategy may not be the most effective way to seek public input. Many communities are instead using engagement strategies such as online forums or customized workshops for particular community groups.

Work with opinion leaders

The City of Vancouver used an open house concept, but requested that representatives from the David Suzuki Foundation be present to “frame” the discussion. Because many of the attendees at the open house were active in the environmental community, favourable comment on the city’s plan from a well-respected organization such as the David Suzuki Foundation increased the community’s support.

Take advantage of technology

As part of its public engagement strategy, the Town of Collingwood used MetroQuest, an interactive software planning tool. The tool allowed municipal staff to show residents the results of their preferences and decisions in increments of 10, 20 or 30 years. Because the tool is visual, residents can see first-hand the changes that their decisions would create in the community. In turn, staff members found that MetroQuest helped them communicate more easily and effectively with residents.

Online tools

Online forums and surveys have become a popular method for reaching out to the public on a number of municipal issues. These online tools can be very effective for public engagement, and many communities find that they get better and more citizen engagement by using them.

But these tools have certain limitations. Some residents may not use the Internet regularly; others may not be comfortable using online tools or may have difficulty expressing their views in writing. Still others may post anonymous, untruthful or rude comments. As a result, a cross-section of residents may be excluded from participating. In addition, it is important to realize that promoting online public consultation can be just as difficult — if not more so — than holding a public meeting.

Step Five: Implement the LAP

Once the plan has been approved, the community can begin to put it into action. As noted previously, many municipalities choose to begin with simple initiatives that will get quick results.⁵ Sharing some immediate successes with stakeholders and the general public can give

⁵ The PCP *Quick Action Guide* lists the top 10 corporate and community emission reduction activities implemented by municipalities. You can find more details about the *Quick Action Guide* in the Additional Resources section at the end of this guide.

a boost to the people in charge of implementing the plan; in the meantime, the groundwork is prepared for the medium- and long-term initiatives.

As noted previously, some organizations in the community are probably better suited to implementing certain initiatives than the municipality is. Partnering with these organizations can be a cost-effective way to meet the community's goals and an excellent way to build momentum and support for the larger sustainability plan.

Work with partners

The City of Whitehorse partnered with the Yukon Conservation Society to conduct residential energy audits. The Society had the technical expertise; the city provided the financing.

Document the steps taken for each project. Such record-keeping will be more easily accomplished if a mechanism is already in place for the various working groups to provide regular reports to the steering committee. Taking minutes of meetings is one way to document a process. Another possibility is to use a template that lists the project name, key contacts and partners, funding, resources, timelines and budget. Documentation that is available to the entire committee will often help avoid the "reinventing the wheel" scenario mentioned in Step Three.

Step Six: Evaluate and monitor the LAP



By regularly evaluating and monitoring the LAP, and each of the plan's projects, the community can measure progress and ensure that the municipality is on track to reach its goals. Periodic monitoring also helps to identify the projects or strategies that work well, those that don't, or the places where improvements can be made.

Similarly, regular updates to the energy and GHG emissions inventories will ensure that the data on which the LAP is based are current. The community can then compare data across years and make minor changes to the LAP as required.

Monitor change

The City of Edmonton uses utility data to measure community energy consumption and GHG emissions. Because the city works with several partners to offer rebates and incentives for energy-efficient products, the city is also able to track certain purchases, such as high-efficiency furnaces, also helping them to track GHG emissions.

Measure progress

The City of Whitehorse arranged for local utility companies to automatically send energy statistics to the city on a regular basis. The city reviews the data each January.

From the start, each initiative within the LAP should have a reporting system so that the steering committee can determine the success or failure of an initiative and can communicate those results to the public.

An important element of Step Six is communicating results to the public, whether those results are favourable or not. Encouraging residents to take action on environmental issues may depend on the initial results of a pilot project; members of the public or the business community may want to see how others react first before trying it themselves.

Results from the LAP should also be communicated to the PCP secretariat at FCM. Using this feedback, PCP can track the progress of municipalities to Milestones Four and Five and can share the results and lessons learned with other municipalities.

The communication tools for regularly updating the public can include municipal and community websites, local media and information pamphlets included with other municipal literature such as property tax, water or electricity bills.

Survey residents

Many of EcoPerth's programs have built-in feedback mechanisms. For example, residents who sign the EcoPerth "Personal Action Pledge" are surveyed periodically to see how they are doing. Each of the EcoPerth teams (similar to the working groups in Step Two) is responsible for tracking the progress of its programs.

Report results

The City of Whitehorse has a "visible strategies" online model that lets any Internet user see the progress made on the sustainability strategy. The website is updated as goals, strategies and actions are finalized.

Sustainability snapshots

This section introduces 11 communities that are putting local action plans (LAPs) into action. Some are new to the process; others have implemented their LAP and are seeing real results.

City of Edmonton, Alberta

www.edmonton.ca/portal/server.pt

Population: 730,372

Carbon Dioxide Reduction Edmonton (CO₂RE, <www.co2re.ca>) is a community-wide initiative to permanently reduce GHG emissions in Edmonton.

The CO₂RE initiative was first envisioned in October 1999. A cross-section of more than 30 people from the residential, business, industrial and institutional sectors worked with the city for more than two years to develop a single coordinated plan. The team, which included planners, developers, social workers, business leaders, environmentalists, engineers, educators and government representatives, consulted extensively with local groups and organizations to develop a consensus on the best approach and strategies.

The City of Edmonton was one of the first municipalities in Canada, along with Calgary, to reach Milestone Five of the PCP framework. The city is now well into the implementation stage of its LAP and has embarked on several of the initiatives that were identified during the planning process. Some of its corporate initiatives include:

- A \$30-million energy management revolving fund that pays for energy-efficiency upgrades to municipal and community infrastructure, such as buildings, light rail stations and traffic signals.
- A Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Silver policy for all new municipal buildings.
- A fleet management program that reduces fuel use through driver education.

Municipal operations in Edmonton account for only three per cent of the city's GHG emissions, and so the city is now focused on engaging the wider community in GHG reduction activities.

CO₂RE chose to focus on residential energy efficiency. It offers a wealth of programs, incentives and rebates to homeowners wishing to make energy-efficient renovations or retrofits to their homes.

In 2005, CO₂RE partnered with Home Depot in its award-winning Home\$avers program, an educational campaign that reached more than 10,000 people. CO₂RE regularly partners with retailers and other organizations to offer promotions or incentives to its residents. It also boasts an impressive membership of 12,000 people who receive regular updates on rebates for energy-efficient products and incentives.

Town of Perth, Ontario

www.town.perth.on.ca

Population: 5,907

EcoPerth (<www.ecoperth.on.ca>) dates back to 1998, when a group of concerned citizens began talking with key individuals and groups in the community. Unlike most of the other municipal governments profiled in this guide, it was EcoPerth, a non-profit organization, that spearheaded the town's involvement in PCP.



EcoPerth's Board of Directors (Photo: EcoPerth).

EcoPerth delivers most of its programs at arm's length from the municipality, although it does partner with the town on certain initiatives, such as tree-planting campaigns and a municipal building retrofit program that saves the town about \$50,000 in energy costs annually. EcoPerth is now working with other municipalities in the Lanark Highlands area to develop a sustainability plan for the region.

EcoPerth's philosophy has always been that **action** leads to **awareness**. All of its programs therefore focus on ways that residents can mitigate and adapt to climate change. To do that, EcoPerth uses four distinct teams:

- The **Green Team** is in charge of initiatives such as an annual tree sale, front-yard tree shading, rainwater conservation and Local Flavour, a program that promotes local food production and consumption.
- The **Building Team** encourages citizens to use less water and energy by providing information on retrofit grant programs, selling rain barrels and promoting the use of solar

energy. EcoPerth mapped the entire town and discovered that almost three-quarters of all homes and buildings could be retrofitted to use a solar hot water system. By buying solar heaters in bulk, EcoPerth makes them available to the public at a reduced cost.

- The **Transportation Team** encourages sustainable transportation through a bicycle users' group, walk-to-work campaigns, hybrid vehicle demonstrations and a rideshare database for carpooling.
- The **Communications Team** keeps the public engaged through a combination of community presentations, news articles, personal action pledges, a quarterly newsletter and the EcoPerth website. They also provide support to residents who want to develop a green action plan for their neighbourhood.

City of Regina, Saskatchewan

www.regina.ca

Population: 179,246

The City of Regina is one of the original members of the “20% Club,” which was re-launched as PCP in 1998.⁶ Regina's Green Ribbon Community Climate Change Advisory Committee (<www.regina.ca>; search on “Green Ribbon”) leads the city's LAP process. The committee consists of city officials, community leaders and stakeholders. It oversees the efforts of four working groups:

- residential
- transportation
- education & communication (includes waste management)
- commercial/industrial

Each group created its own “mini action plan” that includes an economic analysis and a series of recommended actions. Each working group also used focus groups to choose the best course of action, a model that allowed residents to express their views before any decisions were made.

The city's community plan was approved in 2004, and since then, the city has cut GHG emissions from its corporate operations by 12 per cent as compared with 1990 levels. It is now focused on engaging the community as a whole to reduce emissions. A full-time emissions reduction coordinator oversees all community engagement activities, some of which include:

- the *Smart Ways to Save Green Book*, a handbook of actions that residents can take to save money and energy and to reduce emissions;
- a weekly radio show;

6 FCM's 20% Club was renamed the Partners for Climate Protection program when it merged with the Cities for Climate Protection program run by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability (<www.iclei.org>). The mandate of the 20% Club was similar to that of PCP: participating municipalities committed to a 20 per cent reduction in corporate GHG emissions.

- a television spot on a local noon hour news show; and
- a monthly newsletter.

City of Greater Sudbury, Ontario

www.city.greatersudbury.on.ca

Population: 157,857

EarthCare Sudbury (<www.city.greatersudbury.on.ca>) is a partnership between the City of Greater Sudbury, more than 90 community agencies, organizations and businesses, and hundreds of individuals.

EarthCare Sudbury was launched in May 2000. Thirty-seven community partners signed a declaration committing themselves to developing an LAP and increasing the participation of residents in initiatives to improve quality of life and to strengthen the city's economy. The signed declaration was published in the local newspaper.

The LAP process was overseen by a steering committee consisting of representatives from council and staff, public agencies and community stakeholders. It used a six-stage process:

1. Build the foundation, form the steering committee and secure funding.
2. Establish a vision, values and goals by having community partners consult with the larger community.
3. Develop recommendations and action plans for five working groups (residential, industrial/commercial/institutional, municipal, education/outreach and business plan development).
4. Prepare the plan by integrating the recommendations from the working groups.
5. Seek input from the community on the plan.
6. Approve the plan.

The City of Greater Sudbury LAP was approved in 2003 and, since then, the city has moved forward on a number of community initiatives, including a residential energy-efficiency program and a carpooling network. It is now working on a trip reduction program that will assist local employers in developing and implementing customized trip reduction plans.

The city also chose to adopt the principles of community-based social marketing for the activities included in its LAP. These principles are outlined in more depth in the Lessons Learned section.

City of Whitehorse, Yukon

www.city.whitehorse.yk.ca

Population: 20,461

The City of Whitehorse's corporate and community LAP is part of its Official Community Plan. In developing the community side of the plan, municipal staff consulted with council, First Nations, an advisory stakeholders group, special interest groups and residents. The general public was invited to comment on the plan through a submission process. In 2002, the city received a grant from FCM's Green Municipal Fund to complete its LAP, which was ultimately approved in 2004.⁷

Before completing its LAP, the city developed corporate and community GHG inventories. The inventories showed that transportation was the largest local emitter of GHG emissions, and the city therefore chose to concentrate on that area.

The city designed a transportation "charrette"⁸ to solicit community feedback on options for reducing GHG emissions in the transportation sector, including school-based transportation awareness workshops.

The city also received funding from Transport Canada's Urban Transportation Showcase Program to improve its cycling and pedestrian infrastructure (constructing multi-use paths, a new bicycle/pedestrian bridge and new bicycling lanes, and installing new lighting along selected pathways, among other changes), public outreach, education and transportation demand management.

In 2006, the city hired a full-time sustainability coordinator, and currently, it is working on a 50-year sustainability plan that will build on the strategies identified in the LAP. Using an innovative "See-it" online model (whitehorse.visiblestrategies.com), the city's sustainability strategy will evolve as information and recommendations are finalized.



Whitehorse has invested more than \$2 million to improve its cycling infrastructure. (Photo: City of Whitehorse)

7 See the GMF Approved Project Database for the final report of this GMF-funded initiative.

8 Charettes are collaborative design sessions that can be used to generate ideas for an LAP or any individual sustainability action.

City of Kamloops, British Columbia

www.kamloops.bc.ca

Population: 80,376

The City of Kamloops developed a community energy plan more than a decade ago. The city discovered that the plan could be used as a catalyst for many of the initiatives that the city hoped to undertake in the future.

The energy plan quickly took off in the community. For example, Sun Rivers, a golf resort community, and the Kamloops Indian Band developed a master agreement to put 460 acres of reserve land to work for the benefit of the entire community. A successful partnership was then built between the golf resort, the city and the Band to make Sun Rivers the first community in Canada to be entirely heated and cooled with geothermal energy.

The city is now beginning to develop an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP). The ICSP will be used as an umbrella document for many strategic plans that address specific topics with environmental impacts — transportation, stormwater, airshed, energy, and more.

The city is among the more than 70 municipalities in British Columbia that have joined the BC Climate Action Charter (www.cserv.gov.bc.ca/ministry). Local governments that sign the charter agree to become carbon neutral in their municipal operations by 2012.

As part of its work on its carbon-neutral plan, the city reviews all existing management plans and plans under development to ensure that sustainability is considered. The reviews help the city to identify the monitoring, data collection and reporting processes that will be required and how the resulting data can and should be used in the development of other strategic plans. All of this information will also help to inform the city's ICSP process.

Region of Severn Sound, Ontario

www.severnsound.ca

Population: 128,302

In Severn Sound,⁹ a region near Georgian Bay, the LAP process, like that in Perth, grew out of a community-based organization. The Severn Sound Environment Association (SSEA, www.severnsound.ca) is unique in two ways. First, it was formed to resolve a specific problem, and second, it involves nine municipal governments.

In 1987, the International Joint Commission (IJC) listed the Severn Sound watershed as an area of concern because of a number of environmental problems. At the time, eight municipal governments, community groups and provincial and federal scientists came together to form a public advisory committee and to create a Remedial Action Plan (RAP) to restore the

⁹ The Region of Severn Sound includes nine municipalities that are working together on a sustainability plan (Midland, Penetanguishene, Tiny, Tay, Oro-Medonte, Severn, Georgian Bay, Springwater and Orillia).

watershed's environmental quality. Over the years, the RAP team worked to reduce nutrient loading from sewage treatment outflows, stormwater and rural runoff and other "hot spots."

In October 2002, the IJC announced that environmental quality in the watershed had been restored. The SSEA continues to maintain the improvements achieved through the RAP process and to provide services to the now nine participating municipal governments.

The SSEA is now working on a sustainability plan. With a grant from FCM's Green Municipal Fund,¹⁰ the partners hired an environmental consultancy to undertake a portion of the work. Meanwhile, an environmental action team made up of representatives from the SSEA and the nine municipalities, has met with more than 30 community groups to determine the region's priorities. The environmental consultancy has worked on remedial action plans in the past, and so the RAP process will be used as a guide during the preparation of the region's LAP.

City of Vancouver, British Columbia

www.city.vancouver.bc.ca

Population: 578,041

The City of Vancouver has a long history of policies and initiatives related to climate change mitigation and environmental action. In 1990, for example, the city endorsed the goal of reducing emissions by 20 per cent, and in the following year, it enacted a bylaw to improve energy efficiency in all newly constructed buildings.

The city's first corporate Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) was approved in 2003. The goal of that plan was to cut GHG emissions from municipal operations by 20 per cent below 1990 levels by 2010. Its community CCAP was subsequently approved in 2005.

Before crafting the community CCAP, city staff first prepared GHG and energy-use inventories. A "Cool Vancouver" task force, made up of members from utilities, government, universities and colleges, members of the community and staff from all city departments, helped to develop both CCAP plans.

The community CCAP focuses on six priorities:

- home renovations for energy efficiency
- energy-efficient retrofits for institutional facilities
- energy-efficient retrofits for large commercial buildings
- biodiesel fuel blends
- efficient driver training and anti-idling
- transportation alternatives

A major achievement of the community CCAP is the level of dialogue reached with the general public. The city uses a variety of communication tools, such as presentations at public events,

10 See the GMF Approved Projects Database for the final report of this GMF-funded initiative.

distribution of water-saving kits, commuter cycling training sessions and educational materials on climate change to get its message across. Its primary outreach tool is the One Day Vancouver website (<www.onedayvancouver.ca>), an action-oriented site that provides tips and actions that people can take every day.

In March 2007, city council directed staff to begin planning for long-term GHG reductions, with the ultimate goal of becoming a carbon-neutral city. Later that year, council adopted a new community GHG reduction target of 33 per cent below 2007 levels by 2020 and 80 per cent below 2007 levels by 2050. Council has also set a goal of GHG neutrality for all new construction in the city by 2030.

Town of Wolfville, Nova Scotia

www.town.wolfville.ns.ca

Population: 3,772

The Town of Wolfville is moving to become more sustainable by incorporating The Natural Step (TNS, <www.tnscanada.ca>) into its Municipal Planning Strategy (MPS). The town joins other municipalities such as the Resort Municipality of Whistler, British Columbia, and the Town of Canmore, Alberta, in using TNS as a guide to sustainable planning.

Like many of the other communities profiled in this guide, the town received a GMF grant to help develop its sustainability plan.

As a first step, the town struck a task force consisting of members of council, municipal staff, secondary and post-secondary schools and non-governmental organizations. The main role of the task force is to prepare the sustainability plan and to act as a citizen advisory board to the municipality. The task force will also:

- train municipal staff in the use of sustainable design tools;
- establish a public education campaign about sustainability issues;
- redesign the MPS to reflect best practices in sustainability;
- design innovative community sustainability projects (some of which have already been accomplished, such as a lighting retrofit program and a reduction in the cosmetic use of pesticides on town property); and
- develop monitoring tools for sustainability and community health.

In preparing its plan, the town conducted extensive community engagement using “community circles” (small groups coming together to discuss sustainability issues), a household survey and regular open-house meetings.

The task force has also been working to develop a list of action items and policies that are aimed at moving the town toward sustainability. Some of these include encouraging more compact residential development to minimize automobile use, development bonuses to encourage higher density, a source water protection plan and a comprehensive transportation plan.

Town of Collingwood, Ontario

www.collingwood.ca

Population: 17,290

The Town of Collingwood's sustainability efforts date back more than 30 years. Like the watershed in the Region of Severn Sound, Collingwood's harbour had been designated an area of concern by the IJC. A remedial action plan was established, and the harbour was delisted in 1984.

After a five-year process to identify the town's goals and objectives for future growth, Collingwood adopted a new official plan in 2004. In it, the town identified several objectives that dealt with a host of sustainability issues.

With a grant from GMF, the town began working on its sustainability plan in 2005. Council struck a steering committee consisting of a cross-section of municipal staff, councillors and local citizens. The director of the Environment Network (<www.environmentnetwork.org>), a local non-profit organization, chairs the committee.

The committee's first order of business was to develop a stakeholder engagement plan that identified the sectors that needed to be involved in developing the sustainability plan. The engagement plan also mapped out the various strategies that the town would use to engage particular sectors.

The town then used MetroQuest to create a workshop series for public participation. MetroQuest, an interactive planning tool that examines a wide range of indicators to show the long-term outcomes of various choices, demonstrates to citizens how the decisions made today will affect the town's sustainability tomorrow.

Because staff time is tight in this relatively small community, the town chose to hire an independent consultant to help craft its sustainability plan, expected to be completed in the summer of 2008. The town is the lead organization on the plan, which also has attracted the participation of three other municipalities: the Town of the Blue Mountains (<www.thebluemountains.ca>), the Town of Wasaga Beach (<www.wasagabeach.com>) and Clearview Township (<www.clearviewtwp.on.ca>).

City of Sorel-Tracy, Québec

www.ville.sorel-tracy.qc.ca

Population: 34,076

The City of Sorel-Tracy, a municipality just north of Montréal, used Local Agenda 21 (LA21, <www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21>¹¹) as its template for local action planning. The idea of using LA21 emerged after an international meeting of Québec and European researchers and practitioners in October 2002 at the University of Québec in Montréal. After the meeting, a number of Québec participants met to launch a collaborative pilot project designed to develop expertise in LA21 development and implementation.

The City of Sorel-Tracy was one of the cities chosen for the pilot, because the municipality represented the realities of many medium-sized cities in Québec. The city was keen to participate for several reasons. The municipality had a history of environmental initiatives and expertise, particularly with respect to waste management, and it wished to build on that legacy. Sorel-Tracy also had a long history with the metal mining sector, a source of industrial pollution. In addition, the population had aged and young people were leaving the community in search of employment elsewhere. The municipality saw that an LAP could help them respond to many of the foregoing issues. The pilot project began in 2005.



Aerial photo of Sorel-Tracy (Photo: City of Sorel-Tracy).

Before it adopted the LA21 plan, the city had already undertaken a number of environmental initiatives. Sorel-Tracy was Québec's first municipality to use a bioreactor to divert urban waste (more than 75 per cent). Moreover, unlike Montréal, the city was already containing all of its wastewater, which is treated in large aerated ponds with a 90 per cent treatment efficiency.

The city has a training centre in recycling — Le Centre de formation en entreprise et récupération — and boasts a state-of-the-art recycling centre. The municipality also works in partnership with Le Centre de transfert technologie en écologie industrielle (<www.cttei.qc.ca/sr_pages_cttei/historique.htm>). Le Centre is responsible for implementing the municipality's LA21 plan.

¹¹ The LA21 Campaign promotes a participatory long-term strategic planning process that helps municipalities to identify local sustainability priorities and to implement long-term action plans.

Future plans include:

- inventorying all municipal buildings for energy-efficiency retrofits;
- identifying potential protected areas, particularly wetlands, because the region contains the most important floodplain in the St. Lawrence River Valley, including a large archipelago, 20 per cent of the marshes and 40 per cent of the bogs, giving it world biosphere reserve status;
- developing social marketing tools to entrench the concept of sustainable development in the community; and
- developing a port project under which the city would acquire a federal dock to enlarge the Regard-sur-le-Fleuve park and convert industrial areas into parkland.

Lessons learned

Size matters

Generally speaking, there is a correlation between the size of a municipal government and the degree of formality required for the team charged with developing and implementing a local action plan (LAP).¹² Larger municipalities have a greater number of stakeholders (who may have competing interests) that must participate if consensus and support for the community's actions are to be built.

In addition, larger municipalities typically have greater levels of bureaucracy than smaller ones do. In the case of Vancouver, organizers noted that it is senior managers who are primarily responsible for informing council of progress on sustainability initiatives and not necessarily the staff members directly involved in the programs. The reverse is true for Wolfville, a much smaller municipality, where the staff members involved speak directly with members of council.

The municipalities profiled in the preceding section found that, for developing an LAP, a smaller, more cohesive committee tends to work better.

- The City of Edmonton adopted a multi-layered approach. The CO₂RE team, made up of representatives from about 30 different organizations, developed the LAP. The team then relied on a larger “leadership group” — consisting of stakeholders who did not participate in the actual planning process — that acted as a sounding board in reviewing the plan.
- At the City of Greater Sudbury, a mid-sized municipal government, two dedicated members of the public works staff struck the original steering committee. They contacted community and business leaders with messages tailored to their interests and values seeking participants for the steering committee.
- In Perth, on the other hand, EcoPerth found that a grassroots approach, without the heavy bureaucracy often found in more formal structures, led to quick implementation of small actions. The early awareness and momentum gained through these easier actions permitted EcoPerth to capitalize by implementing far more involved initiatives, such as assessing each building in town for its solar retrofit potential.
- Town of Collingwood organizers believe that smaller communities are typically easier to mobilize and can often implement actions more quickly than a larger community can. However, they caution that, to be truly sustainable, smaller communities should look to their neighbouring municipalities or even counties as partners.

The municipalities profiled found that a smaller, more cohesive committee tends to work better.

¹² Bulkeley, H. and Betsill, M. 2005. *Cities and Climate Change Urban Sustainability and Global Environmental Governance*. Routledge. New York.

Actions speak louder than words

The ultimate goal of any LAP is to encourage individuals to reduce GHG emissions, and so successful sustainability plans focus on action.

Some argue that, at the start of implementation, building awareness is more important than on-the-ground actions. The need to build awareness can be important, but some of the communities profiled in this guide demonstrate that, by taking action immediately, they allowed community awareness to grow naturally, so that residents were more receptive to more difficult actions later on. EcoPerth, for example, consciously chose an action-oriented approach rather than the traditional planning–awareness–action continuum.

Creating awareness of climate change issues is an important function for municipal governments, but it may not be as urgent a function as in the past. Communities are now likely to be much more aware of environmental issues than ever before, thanks in large part to the attention that governments, utilities and the media have paid to climate change in recent years.

Waste diversion programs are a prime example of how Canadian municipalities have promoted action ahead of awareness. Residents who initially participated in these programs did not have extensive knowledge of waste management issues. Rather, they saw recycling as “good thing for the environment,” and recycling habits quickly became the norm among peers and neighbours. Some municipal governments have also been highly successful in expanding that action into awareness of greater issues, such as the tax dollars saved if waste is diverted and the lifespan of a municipal landfill extended, or the reductions in GHG emissions that can be achieved with residential composting.

On the whole, the best approach is one that combines action with awareness.

- The Kamloops WaterSmart program, which educates residents on water conservation, is a good example. The city first promoted awareness by distributing information to residents in their water bills. It then backed up that awareness campaign with a water restriction bylaw. Even-numbered property addresses are allowed to sprinkle or irrigate only on even-numbered days, and odd-numbered property addresses on odd-numbered days. Fines are imposed for failure to follow the bylaw.
- Community members in Perth attended a meeting early in the LAP process and were invited to choose their priorities from among approximately 100 potential actions. The priorities that emerged included renewable energy, sustainable transportation and energy efficiency; these were the actions that EcoPerth implemented first. The need for action, and the reasons underlying that need, emerged as people engaged in the various programs.

The best approach is one that combines action with awareness.

A community needs to carefully balance its planning and awareness-building process with the implementation of programs. Taking action too soon can be costly, but not taking action also has associated costs. The longer a community delays taking action on environmental issues, the more it might continue to spend on energy, for example, or the less likely stakeholders might be to retain interest.

Community-based social marketing

One of the most successful techniques to build awareness and support for action is called community-based social marketing (CBSM). The CBSM process identifies barriers to action and then develops specific strategies to overcome those barriers.

Public commitments, prompts and incentives are among the main tools of the CBSM approach. Case studies of environmental initiatives that use these techniques show that positive behaviour change occurs more frequently when economics and health, rather than merely environmental altruism, are promoted as incentives to action.

- The City of Greater Sudbury used CBSM techniques to establish its priorities for action, to determine the barriers that prevented people from taking action and then to develop strategies to overcome those barriers. For example, when one of its working groups identified idling as a major concern, the city partnered with Natural Resources Canada on an anti-idling campaign. The main barrier identified was the lack of awareness among drivers of the financial, environmental and health costs of idling an engine unnecessarily. To overcome that barrier, students were posted at high-traffic areas (schools, community centres, shopping malls, etc.), where they approached drivers to explain the issues. The students then asked each driver to affix a vinyl cling sticker to the car's windshield as a reminder (a public commitment and a prompt) to turn off the engine when stopped for short periods of time. Results showed that drivers cut the duration of vehicle idling between 25 per cent and 40 per cent, depending on the location.

Emphasize local benefits

People are motivated most by what affects them directly, and so initiatives that promote economic benefits tend to be more effective than do calls for environmental protection or GHG reductions.

Consumer patterns bear this out. Marketing strategies that emphasize the economic benefits of compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) — for example, giveaways, incentives and rebate programs by local utilities, governments and non-profit organizations — have proven highly effective. In 2007, Home Depot, Canada's largest retailer of CFLs, reported that sales grew by more than 350 per cent between 2004 and 2006.

Environmental messages should still be used to create awareness of the issues, but municipalities find greater uptake of their sustainability programs when they can answer the public's question "What's in it for me?"

- EcoPerth sold CFLs as stocking stuffers during the 2002 holiday season and marketed them with both an economic (cost savings) and an environmental (CO₂ reductions) message. The initiative worked because it was an easy and inexpensive way for residents to participate in reducing emissions and to pass that message on to friends and family. EcoPerth used that success to implement a community-wide retrofit program that converted all outdoor porch lights to CFLs.
- Health issues are another excellent way to encourage people to take action. For example, the Kamloops TravelSmart program promotes change in travel behaviour and

Municipalities should try to answer the public's question "What's in it for me?"

encourages sustainable community development to minimize demands on the city's transportation system. The City of Kamloops partnered with its medical community to help build awareness of the need for travel behaviour change by educating patients about the health effects of poor air quality and the need for more physical fitness. Doctors were able to reach residents in a way that municipal planners could not, providing a credible source of information on the subject.

Emphasizing local benefits can also affect how an LAP is framed, particularly at the start of the process: How will support be sought from key stakeholders? Which messages will resonate the most with the general public?

When the City of Greater Sudbury developed its strategic energy plan, staff initially focused council's attention on facts and figures only: the plan would reduce municipal energy costs by 30 per cent and save \$1 million annually. Staff were then able to make the case that these savings could be reinvested in other community projects.

Economic benefits can accrue to the community as a whole, the individual or the business community. An entire community benefits when economic savings from projects that lower energy use are invested in other priorities (Sudbury). Businesses benefit when consumers are encouraged to buy local (EcoPerth's Local Flavour). Individuals save money when they improve their home's energy efficiency (Edmonton's Home\$avers).

- Many of the stakeholders in Edmonton's CO₂RE team came from the business community. These stakeholders made persuasive peer-to-peer arguments showing how the business community stood to benefit from change: opportunities for new business development, improved competitiveness and sustainability of local businesses, and increased disposable income for individuals through reduced energy costs.
- When EcoPerth completed community energy and GHG inventories for the Town of Perth, it found that about \$19 million was spent on energy-related activities annually, with almost 90 per cent of that amount leaving the community. That figure was a surprise to many and helped EcoPerth to convince town councillors of the need to implement programs for reducing energy use.
- City of Whitehorse organizers believe that a key factor in its winning bid for the 2007 Canada Winter Games was the proposal's environmental aspects. With the help of the Yukon government, the city incorporated green building design into the athlete's village. That structure uses about 30 per cent less energy than a conventional building. The city followed that up with a recommendation that it adopt the LEED Green Building Rating System for all new municipal buildings.
- Severn Sound's agricultural community benefited greatly from the work done by the SSEA. The SSEA offered rural residents grant money for water quality projects through the Healthy Futures Program offered by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food.¹³ Landowners received a 50 per cent cost share on such projects as manure management, clean water diversion, livestock restriction and nutrient management plans.

13 Healthy Futures was a \$90 million cost-sharing grant program available to all sectors in Ontario's agri-food industry. The program ended in 2004 (<www.greenontario.org/strategy/agriculture.html>).

- The City of Vancouver created the legal framework and obtained the charter authority to create its own energy utility. That utility's first project was a district heating system for the Southeast False Creek neighbourhood, which will be home to the athlete's village for the 2010 Winter Olympics. When fully built, the community will house up to 12,000 residents. The heating system will use, in part, waste heat from the city's sewer system, a free and reliable source of heat that will lower energy costs and emissions.
- An aging population and an exodus by young people who could not find professional opportunities in the community prompted the City of Sorel-Tracy to include social issues such as housing and employment as broad objectives in its LA21 plan. As a first step, the city retrofitted a church to provide social housing, addressing some of the needs of the population. In future, the municipality plans to encourage more employment through local revitalization projects.

Find champions

Champions can be found in every sector of the community involved in the LAP. Politicians, staff members, stakeholders and individuals can all be champions.

The support of elected municipal officials and staff is essential to a successful LAP. Political commitment creates a groundswell of support and, perhaps more importantly, sends the right message to the community.

Edmonton city councillors made a commitment to tackle their municipal energy use before asking the community to take action. By "cleaning its own house first" and showing leadership to the community, the city gained valuable experience at the municipal level that was later useful in building the community plan.

Members of council often sit on the committee that oversees the LAP process, or on the steering committee itself. In the case of Perth, an ad hoc council committee fulfilled that role; Sudbury's council passed a resolution that demonstrated their political support for the process and also appointed two councillors to sit on the EarthCare steering committee. Mid-way through the process, three more Sudbury councillors chose to participate.

Political support can be secured through frequent interaction with council, including regular reports — a necessary prerequisite if requests to council are to be made for future support or resources. Political support therefore also translates into practical support, in particular the allocation of financial and staff resources, which are critical to maintaining momentum in the LAP process.

- In some cases, it takes only one elected official to make a difference, particularly in smaller communities. One Collingwood councillor attended the 2006 FCM Sustainable Communities conference and participated in a session on MetroQuest, a computerized planning tool. Recognizing the potential of MetroQuest, that councillor convinced the rest of council to use it as a sustainability planning resource.

- Perth's champion was a local environmental consulting company, REIC Perth,¹⁴ the originator of the EcoPerth idea. This type of champion can be a weakness because of poor integration into the municipal structure. In the case of EcoPerth, organizers admitted the existence of that weakness despite its ad hoc council committee. They also note that, even when an initiative is well integrated with municipal structures, political support can weaken as the limits of municipal financial support are reached. Nevertheless, it was this outside champion that convinced Perth to sign on to PCP, which in turn prompted the town to implement its own actions and support those of EcoPerth.

The support of senior staff should not be underestimated. In some cases, it may take only one or two dedicated personnel to begin the process. In other cases, where only senior staff pass information to council, those staff members need to be aware of and supportive of the LAP and its goals. City of Edmonton organizers note that although they gained support from community leaders and council, it wasn't until senior city staff members became involved that the process truly took off and progress began to be made.

The need to gain the support of councillors and senior staff highlights a potential problem. The LAP process can stall when and if people who are critically engaged in the process leave municipal government (a councillor's term is typically three to four years). Gaining the support of many champions at various levels in the community can help to maintain the long-term sustainability of the LAP.

Articulate a vision

Creating a vision statement and guiding principles takes time, but the visioning process has benefits that are not always clear at the outset.

- In Edmonton, organizers discovered that the very process of crafting the vision statement created a debate among the stakeholders. The resulting discussion cleared up many misconceptions that the stakeholders had about the LAP.
- The City of Greater Sudbury crafted a vision and a statement of principles. Stakeholders and other community partners then signed the EarthCare Declaration that supported the vision and principles, making their commitment public by publishing the Declaration in the local newspaper.
- The Town of Perth found that the mission statement and guiding principles of the PCP program were sufficient for its purposes. The city used those items as a guide to its own action plan.
- The Town of Collingwood is just beginning the development of its LAP, and like Severn Sound, the town has hired a consultant to assist with strategic planning and goal-setting for the community. Both communities are using consultants with whom they have worked before and who know the local issues well.

14 "REIC" originally stood for Renewable Energy in Canada, but once EcoPerth began working on other environmental issues, it dropped the full name but kept the initials.

- City of Vancouver organizers caution that care must be taken if municipal governments plan to use outside expertise. Consultants must have a good grasp of local issues and must know the scope of a municipality's authority and power.
- The Town of Wolfville is using The Natural Step planning framework, which promotes a series of guiding principles that communities can use as a foundation or a "jumping-off point" to their own vision and set of sustainability principles.

In many cases, the size of the municipal government may be the deciding factor in choosing whether to spend time articulating a unique vision statement. In larger municipalities with more stakeholders, creating a vision plays an important role in gaining stakeholder commitment and keeping the group organized and interested. In smaller municipal governments, the same goal may be attainable through more informal means.

Foster community ownership

All of the communities profiled in this guide emphasize the need for a community plan to reflect local needs. In other words, stakeholders and the general public must all feel a sense of ownership in the plan and of power to enact change.

Organizers in Edmonton and Sudbury point out that city staff would have found it relatively easy to use their accumulated knowledge and experience to independently develop a plan. But the lack of community ownership would have made effective implementation of such a plan unlikely. Methods must be found to foster community ownership at the planning stage, because the municipality must rely on the community as a whole during implementation.

Creating an organizational structure that includes relevant stakeholders and developing a plan that responds to community concerns helps to foster feelings of ownership. In Perth, ownership was vested in the community when the public consultation process selected the priority actions. Because the programs put into place by EcoPerth came directly from those consultations, a greater willingness to participate was fostered.

- EcoPerth also supports other community groups in implementing their own environmental programs. As noted earlier, EcoPerth grew from an idea put forward by a local environmental consulting company, REIC Perth. REIC Perth uses some of its own profits to fund local programs, allowing residents to take the lead and further fostering the sense of community ownership. Typically, this funding is small, but REIC Perth believes that it is a good example of a micro-loan system, whereby a community group can deliver a program with far fewer financial and human resources than the municipality might have to dedicate.
- As mentioned earlier, the City of Vancouver invited representatives from the David Suzuki Foundation to attend the public meeting at which they launched their draft community LAP. With the foundation's support, the city saw a change in public perception — from an attitude of suspicion of the municipal government, to one that prompted more stakeholders to get on board with the city's plan.

Focus groups and workshops — like those outlined in Step Four in the Begin planning section — tend to have greater success because they provide a more personal forum in which members of the public can voice their views before any final decisions are made. Involving the

community early and often leads to greater public commitment and support when the LAP is ready to be launched.

Engage, engage, engage again

Just as the members of the public need to feel that their opinions are being heard, core stakeholders, steering committee members and municipal staff need to be continually re-engaged in the process if their interest and support are to be maintained.

Involvement in the development of an LAP tends to occur at two levels:

- Community and business leaders, chief executive officers, presidents of universities and colleges, and heads of school boards, among others, are usually involved at the steering committee level.
- Staff members, who support the community and business leaders, are involved at the working group level where recommendations for activities are developed.

The City of Greater Sudbury's official launch of its LAP generated a sense of excitement and commitment among participants. Later in the process, city organizers asked the original stakeholders to sign a second declaration to reaffirm the original commitment. This second declaration was more specific in its intent: it asked stakeholders not only to commit to the implementation of the LAP in the community, but also to adhere to the guiding principles within their own organizations.

- The Town of Perth found that having the local newspaper editor as one of its champions was instrumental in keeping other stakeholders and the public informed. The editor also served as chair of the Perth business improvement association and became an EcoPerth board member. The regular articles published in the local newspaper provided a yardstick against which progress was measured and were a strong motivator for action.
- In Edmonton, commitment from the CO₂RE team members grew over time. All members brought their own priorities to the table, and so it was important to find common ground such as community benefits and opportunities. Edmonton organizers discovered that the longer and more often the group met, the better. To maintain momentum, CO₂RE periodically holds two-day retreats that allow the group to come together and flesh out aspects of its LAP.
- Initially, the City of Whitehorse created a "green team." A member of each city department was involved, and the group met regularly to discuss initiatives and to take information back to their respective departments.
- In Severn Sound, the Remedial Action Plan (RAP) was the result of many groups coming together to deal with a common problem. The public advisory committee that was created became a focal point for public consultation. There, ideas could be exchanged between the RAP team and the general public. The committee continues to serve as a sounding board and advisor.

Having an active environmental community outside of municipal government is also an advantage. Non-governmental organizations can create positive pressure on a steering committee to continue its work on any given issue, further reinforcing commitment to the LAP.

Timing is everything

Although full public consultation is a priority for all the communities profiled here, the general tendency has been to hold these consultations later in the planning process. The towns of Perth, Collingwood and Wolfville are exceptions. All used some form of public consultation to determine action priorities before their LAPs were developed.

Other municipal governments consider it more important to start by engaging key stakeholders. In their view, approaching the public prematurely raises the risk of having the process sidetracked by other agendas.

Generally speaking, communities may wish to delay full public consultations until a draft plan or action items are in place. Once stakeholders and the public accept the plan and council has approved it, additional consultations can take place to promote the plan and encourage public involvement in its implementation.

The municipal governments profiled in this guide generally acknowledge that the *type* of public consultation that takes place is the important element.

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The open house style of consultation, where the public is invited to view plans in a passive manner, is not necessarily the best way to obtain a wide range of public opinion. Several of the communities profiled here commented on a feeling they perceived among citizens that decisions have already been made by the time an open house is held, leaving little room for meaningful input. Open houses also tend to attract citizens who are already engaged; they may leave out large segments of the population.

Focus groups, workshops and design charettes are typically more successful. Specific groups or stakeholders can be invited to a workshop session to determine priorities or to comment on a draft plan. Invitees can be identified from among the members of the wide-ranging stakeholder group that was initially contacted but that ultimately did not wish to sit on the steering committee.

- In Whitehorse, the engineering department was in the process of conducting a city-wide transportation study. At the same time, the city was working with a non-profit organization to create a community charette on transportation issues. The city brought the study (which would have been conducted by city staff without public input) and the charette together to form a more practical and transparent process. The city has since used the charette model to prepare neighbourhood designs.

Power to the people

Engaging an entire community on climate change issues can be an overwhelming challenge. To avoid the “too much information, too little time” scenario, engagement of the community on one particular or pressing environmental issue can be used as leverage toward engagement in other, perhaps more difficult, actions or in the lengthier planning process.

- For example, the community in the Severn Sound region had been very active in the remedial action plan. According to organizers, they were “used to being involved.” When

it came time for the organizers to seek stakeholders for the LAP process, they invited people who had been actively involved in the previous RAP process.

- Despite the Town of Perth's previous lack of environmental leadership, a strong atmosphere of community involvement permeates the city, specifically as seen in the restoration of its heritage downtown in the 1970s. EcoPerth tapped into that community spirit and used it to engage residents in its environmental programs.

A history of environmental activism can also lay the groundwork for municipal politicians, staff and community leaders to join in a wider public consultation process. Edmonton, for instance, is an environmental leader among Canadian municipal governments. Along with Calgary, it is among the first cities in Canada to achieve all five PCP Milestones. It used its corporate leadership in environmental protection to engage the wider community.

- EcoPerth, the City of Vancouver and the Town of Wolfville all used Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth* as a way to engage residents. Vancouver asked the theatre owner if city staff could be on hand at the end of the film for a discussion of the issues and to promote the One Day Vancouver initiative. As one organizer put it, "It cost us nothing, and people showed up in droves." Over the course of two days, 640 people showed up to see the film in Wolfville (close to 17 per cent of the population) with many people remaining after the screening to discuss the issues.
- Wolfville organizers also say that their experience with community circles — small groups of people getting together to discuss an issue — will likely become an ongoing strategy to gauge public opinions concerning other issues facing the community.
- The City of Edmonton decided to concentrate on residential energy-efficiency issues. Along with its Home\$avers program, incentives and rebates, the city added a hotline that people could call with their questions. That hotline has now been switched to the municipality's 311 information line for 24-hour service, and the city is piggybacking on federal retrofit programs, such as the various federal ecoENERGY initiatives.
- By using the MetroQuest planning tool, the Town of Collingwood was able to show the community exactly what can happen in the future based on decisions made today. Because MetroQuest is a visual tool, it can demonstrate a wide variety of scenarios. Town organizers said that the tool also helps them to communicate in a way that would not otherwise be possible.

Many of the communities profiled in this guide said that, whatever form community engagement takes — and regardless of whether engagement takes place before, during or after LAP approval — a municipality should try to go to where the people are, rather than ask people to come to them.



Karen Yeung staffs the CO₂RE booth
(Photo: City of Edmonton).

Because of the City of Edmonton's focus on residential energy efficiency, CO₂RE is always represented at home shows and renovation shows — gatherings of people who are most likely to be interested in that issue. Collingwood took MetroQuest directly to schools and other groups.

Go to where the people are, rather than ask people to come to you.

In an era of political cynicism, these active and proactive approaches speak volumes about the value that municipalities place on the public's views.

A word about websites

Many municipal governments use a website as their primary form of outreach. The World Wide Web can be an excellent means of providing information and tips on actions to take and of keeping the community informed of events and public meetings. However, communities should bear in mind that unless a corresponding “call to action” is delivered, websites can be considered only a complementary form of engagement, not a primary one.

One excellent use of a website for sustainability planning is as a place for residents to voluntarily sign up for regular updates on the municipality's progress and for action tips. With the proper privacy advisories in place, the names and addresses collected can be used to create lists of engaged residents. Edmonton's CO₂RE website has more than 12,000 members, each of whom receives regular newsletters with ideas on how to make more energy-efficient choices. The members also benefit from special promotions on energy-efficient products and programs developed exclusively for CO₂RE members.

Partner power

Aside from core stakeholders, other partners can offer unique assistance with certain aspects of the LAP.

- The Town of Wolfville has a long-standing partnership with the Centre for Rural Sustainability (CRS, <www.ruralsustainability.org>), a non-profit organization created by a group of university professors. CRS helps rural Nova Scotia communities with sustainable strategic decision-making; the group is also certified to assist communities wanting to use The Natural Step.
- The City of Edmonton partnered with Home Depot to make its Home\$avers materials available to consumers. CO₂RE knew that having information available to consumers as they were shopping for renovation materials or for energy-efficient products was the easiest and fastest way to get that information into their hands. CO₂RE also partnered with Sears Home Central on promotions for its members.

- The City of Vancouver partnered with several retail outlets on its One Day Vancouver social marketing initiative, a campaign designed to encourage residents to take small, everyday actions to become more environmentally conscious. Coffee shops, yoga studios, clothing stores and other retailers promoted the website in their own shops, “seeding” the ideas behind One Day Vancouver.
- The City of Sorel-Tracy partnered with the le Centre de transfert technologie en écologie industrielle to deliver its LA21 plan. It has also developed relationships with several other organizations, including a regional environmental council, the geography and environmental department at the Montréal campus of the University of Québec, a provincial research and development centre and le Centre québécois du développement durable (<www.cqdd.qc.ca>).
- Media should also be considered a key partner. Perth’s local newspaper publishes regular articles about EcoPerth’s programs. Regina has both a weekly radio show and a spot on the local noontime television news every two weeks.
- For smaller communities, partnering with neighbouring municipalities can maximize scarce resources. For example, Collingwood and its three neighbouring municipalities have a vibrant tourism industry that creates certain unique environmental challenges. (The area’s population can increase by as much as 25 per cent during the tourist season.) Because all of the area municipalities have similar sustainability issues, it made sense for Collingwood to partner with them to develop its LAP.

Local and provincial utilities are also excellent partners. Many already have energy conservation programs in place.

By partnering with other organizations, municipal governments can often avoid “reinventing the wheel.” Vancouver organizers tapped into the EnerGuide for Houses program (later replaced by the ecoENERGY program) and worked with realtors and financial institutions to encourage homebuyers and homeowners to invest in energy efficiency. They also worked with Natural Resources Canada on an anti-idling bylaw and education campaign. Although idling was not a high priority for the city, they chose to “strike when the iron was hot”: NRCan was offering financial assistance for such programs.

Plan to monitor and evaluate

Milestone One in the PCP framework involves gathering baseline information on energy use and emissions. Establishing performance indicators for each project (e.g. number of participants, GHG reductions, litres of water saved, etc.) also helps a municipality understand which programs are working and where amendments might need to be made.

- The City of Vancouver has had great success measuring its transportation initiatives. Using a combination of measurement methods (traffic, cycling and pedestrian counts, public transit data, fuel sales, etc.), they can “tweak” programs as needed.

If progress of the LAP process is to be monitored, baseline **community** information has to be gathered at the start. Community surveys can measure public awareness of climate change, the actions that residents are already taking and the willingness of residents to undertake further action.

- The City of Edmonton conducts an annual survey to determine awareness of its CO₂RE programs and of environmental issues in general. The first survey, conducted in 2004, showed that about 20 per cent of city residents had heard of CO₂RE and that slightly fewer than half were concerned about climate change.
- EcoPerth conducted a random survey of 100 residents to gather baseline information on public knowledge and attitudes. That information, together with data gathered in the inventory of community GHG emissions, provided a baseline against which to measure the cumulative impact of EcoPerth's projects.
- A community-based social marketing consultant helped the City of Greater Sudbury to conduct a wide-ranging public survey that included questions on general environmental awareness and specific behaviours and attitudes. Because the CBSM approach recognizes that attitudes and behaviour change slowly over time, this information continues to be useful in establishing priorities and identifying barriers.

Local action planning should be sustainable

Some community-based initiatives begin with great enthusiasm and then, somewhere along the way, lose momentum. Loss of momentum can happen for a variety of reasons: champions move away or leave office, community engagement is inadequate, working groups or plans are poorly structured, or funding for sustainable initiatives is lacking. Municipalities can ensure that their LAPs are sustainable by creating structures that can survive such challenges.

- One of the City of Greater Sudbury's original working groups devoted its time to developing a business plan to ensure the LAP's long-term sustainability. They reviewed many different models, including revolving funds and sales of surplus city property, as possible revenue streams.
- The interest earned from a revolving fund can pay for the ongoing costs of coordination and management to sustain initiatives beyond the first few years. The City of Edmonton created its revolving fund from an initial municipal investment of \$5 million. The fund has since grown to \$30 million.
- The City of Regina established a formal standing committee that regularly reports to council. Within the committee, each subcommittee or working group prepares its own "mini action plan" that is incorporated into the larger LAP. The committee also conducts a review and prepares a strategic plan each year, giving municipal staff an opportunity to see the progress that has been made or the areas where improvements can be made.
- The City of Sorel-Tracy plans to hold another full public consultation meeting in 2009 to gauge the public's reaction to some of the projects implemented to date. It has also realized that the concept of sustainable development must be better incorporated into the municipality's entire structure: it is putting together a forum to engage stakeholders to work with the municipality to integrate sustainability concepts throughout the municipality's language and practices.
- An important philosophy that the Town of Wolfville follows is that "a mistake is considered a second chance." Town organizers note that municipal governments aren't necessarily experts at sustainability planning, but that provided the plan is evaluated on

a regular basis, there will always be another opportunity to get it right. In addition, town council conducts an annual review of its guiding principles and sustainability objectives.

Participating in PCP can insulate a municipality from some of the common pitfalls that can affect an LAP by sharing experiences of other communities.

Experience the benefits

Whatever your municipality's reasons are for becoming more sustainable, hundreds of communities across Canada have already experienced the benefits of having a local action plan (LAP). Lower energy costs, a more engaged citizenry, more efficient buildings, cleaner air and water, and more sustainable transportation options are just some of the many benefits that come from having a well-designed and implemented LAP.

Of course, there are as many ways of achieving sustainability as there are municipalities in Canada, but some factors are common to all. A sustainable LAP should include the following elements:

- Involvement from many different stakeholders so that the LAP process can survive if key individuals or sectors withdraw from the process.
- Clear and measurable criteria for success and regular evaluation of these criteria.
- Regular reporting of results to political supporters and the public.
- Sustained public outreach that maintains public support and encourages action by community members.
- A structure that allows regular re-examination of the plan, its goals and its progress.

PCP helps communities establish and sustain LAPs by linking municipalities, by showcasing municipal best practices and by providing a range of planning tools. Each municipality profiled in this Guide owes some measure of its success to the experiences of and lessons learned from other municipalities. By working together, Canadian municipal governments can respond to global environmental concerns while creating local benefits for their communities.

Additional resources

Local action planning

Partners for Climate Protection www.fcm.ca/gmf

Several publications are available to help you to achieve the PCP milestones. Visit the Partners for Climate Protection pages on the FCM Green Municipal Fund website at <www.fcm.ca/gmf> to download the *Model Climate Change Action Plan* and *Adapting to Climate Change: An Introduction for Canadian Municipalities*, among other useful documents. Also visit the Awards page and Green Municipal Fund Approved Projects Database for examples of sustainable community development initiatives across the country.

FCM's Green Municipal Fund www.fcm.ca/gmf

The Government of Canada endowed the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) with \$550 million to establish the Green Municipal Fund™ (GMF) to provide a long-term, sustainable source of financing for municipal governments and their partners. The Fund supports communities to improve air, water and soil quality, and to address climate change. GMF provides low-interest loans and grants, builds capacity, and shares knowledge to support municipal governments and their partners in developing communities that are more environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. Funding is allocated to capital projects and studies in six sectors of municipal activity: brownfields, energy, planning, transportation, waste and water. To ensure the greatest possible impact, GMF invests in the best examples of municipal leadership in sustainable development — examples that can be replicated in other communities.

ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability www.iclei.org

ICLEI is an international association of local governments and national and regional local government organizations that have made a commitment to sustainable development. More than 800 cities, towns, counties and associations worldwide are ICLEI members. ICLEI provides technical consulting, training and information services to build capacity, share knowledge and support local government in the implementation of sustainable development.

Ontario Planning Journal *Healthy Communities, Sustainable Communities: A Call to Action* www.ontarioplanners.on.ca

The Ontario Planning Journal (OPJ) is published by the Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI). OPPI is the recognized voice of the province's planning profession. It provides leadership on policy related to planning, development, the environment and related issues. As the Ontario affiliate of the Canadian Institute of Planners, OPPI represents more than 2,700

planners and approximately 500 student members across the province. OPPI members work for government, private industry, community agencies and academic institutions. You must be a member of OPPI or subscribe to the OPJ to access past journal articles.

Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe
Guide to Implementing Local Environmental Action Programs
www.rec.org

The mission of the Regional Environmental Center (REC) for Central and Eastern Europe is to assist in solving the environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe by encouraging cooperation among non-governmental organizations, governments, business and other environmental stakeholders, by supporting the free exchange of information and by promoting public participation in environmental decision-making. The *Guide to Implementing Local Environmental Action Programs* was developed by the Institute for Sustainable Communities (<www.iscvt.org>) in cooperation with the REC to support local governments in fulfilling their environmental responsibilities.

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association
www.msp.auma.ca

The Alberta Urban Municipalities Association (AUMA) represents Alberta's urban municipalities, including cities, towns, villages, summer villages, specialized municipalities, and associate and affiliate members. AUMA represents and advocates for the interests of all members to provincial and federal governments and to other provincial and federal organizations. AUMA's Munilink provides a means of using the wisdom and expertise of community members to discover innovative solutions that address today's social, cultural, economic, environmental and governance challenges while leaving a positive legacy for future generations.

Infrastructure Canada
Integrated Community Sustainability Planning

Integrated Community Sustainability Planning provides background information that provinces and territories, municipalities and other stakeholders can use to enter into an informed dialogue on integrated community sustainability plans.

Integrated community sustainability planning

Natural Step Canada
www.naturalstep.org/canada

The Natural Step (TNS) is a non-profit organization providing results-oriented advisory and training services to help community and business leaders integrate social, environmental and economic decision-making into their operations with a holistic, proven and scientifically rigorous framework. TNS offers an integrated community sustainability planning tool on its website at <www.naturalstep.org/canada> (search on "integrated community sustainability planning tool").

Pembina Institute

<http://communities.pembina.org/work/sustainability-planning>

The mission of the Pembina Institute is to advance sustainable energy solutions through innovative research, education, consulting and advocacy. The Institute offers ICSP services to help communities define and achieve their sustainable community vision.

Capacity building

FCM Capacity Building Webinar Series

www.fcm.ca/gmf

Webinars are interactive, web-based seminars that offer all the perks of a workshop from the comfort of your own home or office. Webinars offered by FCM cover many different topics, including assistance on working through the PCP Milestones, climate change and energy planning, and assistance when applying for GMF funding.

Community-based social marketing

Fostering Sustainable Behaviour

www.cbsm.com

The Fostering Sustainable Behaviour website includes an online guide that provides information on the use of community-based social marketing to design and evaluate programs that foster sustainable behaviour; a searchable database of articles, case studies, graphics and downloadable reports; and discussion forums for sharing information.

Tools of Change: Proven Methods for Promoting Health and Environmental Citizenship

www.toolsofchange.com

The Tools of Change website was founded on the principles of community-based social marketing. It offers tools, case studies and a planning guide for helping people take actions and adopt habits that promote environmental and human health.