



TOWN OF FORT SMITH

Integrated Community Sustainability Plan 2010 to 2014

Condensed – Full Plan available at www.fortsmith.ca or from Town Hall

Prepared: March 2010





Town of Fort Smith

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Town of Fort Smith

Executive Summary

The Town of Fort Smith engaged FSC Architects & Engineers to assist with the preparation of their Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP). The Town also engaged Stand Alone Energy Systems Ltd of Fort Smith to help with the process and help co-ordinate the Community Energy Plan.

The process included an information-gathering phase, three focus group sessions, a household survey (89 returned), an Open House with the community– *ideasFortSmith* – (approximately 200 in attendance), ten personal interviews, meetings, Town Council sessions and discussions with staff.

The Town of Fort Smith was incorporated as a town in 1966. With a population of 2,430 people, it is known for its natural environment and warm hospitality. The Town's location although at the 'end of the road' offers a safe, secure community with a focus on outdoor and family life.

Overall information from the residents indicates that there is an understanding of the town's challenges. Residents want open communication/transparency and are willing to contribute to the town's continued enhancement in many ways.

Key Strengths of the town were identified as:

- The People of Fort Smith
- Our Location
- Our Natural Environment - River, the rapids, the pelicans and whooping cranes; and wilderness areas
- Volunteer Spirit
- Friends, families and neighbors
- Safety – a safe place
- Aurora College
- The Recreation Centre
- Peaceful and clean place
- Our Perseverance – people and environment

Key Weaknesses were:

- Unsightly properties in Town
- Condition of the roads and streets
- Drugs & Alcohol issues
- Lack of unity at times
- Lack of Services for visitors and residents especially youth



Town of Fort Smith

Vision

The Town of Fort Smith will work with its partners to enhance our excellent quality of life by respecting values, traditions, and healthy lifestyles. We will continue to advance as a unified, active and prosperous community.

Our Value Statements

1. We value an open, transparent, effective government.
2. We value our natural environment.
3. We value a safe and hospitable community for our residents and visitors.
4. We value education.
5. We value the use of sustainable energy sources.
6. We value active living, health and wellness.
7. We value effective communication.
8. We value community unity through partnerships.
9. We value the passion and commitment of our volunteers.

ICSP Overview

In November 2005, the New Deal for Cities and Communities (NDCC) between Canada and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) was signed to transfer federal gas tax funding to NWT Community Governments. Subsequently, each Community Government was invited to join this program and signed an agreement with the GNWT outlining the requirements and benefits under the program.

The NDCC provides financial assistance to Community Governments to support the sustainability of capital municipal infrastructure. Through this investment Community Governments have the opportunity to maintain or enhance economic, social and cultural opportunities and well being, while protecting and improving the quality of the environment.

Funding under this program supports the development of public transit systems, and water and wastewater systems, solid waste management, community energy systems, and community capacity building.

As part of the agreement, Community Governments are required to develop an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) by March 31, 2010. In exchange for new multi-year funding allocations and new decision making abilities under the New Deal, NWT Community Governments are required to develop and implement ICSPs that, at a minimum, include the following components;

1. Community Strategic Plan: Planning for long term priorities of the community
2. Capital Investment Plan: Preparation of a multi-year capital investment plan
3. Community Energy Plan: Taking stock of existing energy consumption and developing a plan to reduce energy and improve efficiency
4. Human Resource Plan: Planning to make manage and promote human resources and build capacity.

This report is produced with the assistance of the ICSP Toolkit, developed by NWTAC and MACA. It provides a summary of what our vision for the Town of Fort Smith is in the future, how we will achieve this vision and how we will ensure its sustainability.



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Current Situation

The Town of Fort Smith with a population of 2,430 and a land area of 92.97 sq. km has a mix of land uses - residential, commercial, recreational, open space, institutional and industrial. The Town is located on the banks of the Slave River.

Local government commenced in Fort Smith in 1954 with the election of a local advisory council and progressed first to village status in the early 1960s, and then to town status in 1966.

The Town of Fort Smith is known for its natural environment. Natural features include: the Slave River, the rapids, the pelicans, whooping cranes and many surrounding wilderness areas. The Town has a strong education and recreation focus and prides itself on family life and volunteerism.

A primary source of employment is the educational sector - Aurora College Headquarters, Thebacha Campus and two schools. Government departments & agencies located in Fort Smith also provide many employment opportunities.

There are a number of public facilities in the Town including: schools, churches, a Recreation Centre, an arena, a library, a museum and a variety of government buildings.

The Town has nine elected municipal councilors including the Mayor. A new Council and Mayor were elected on October 19, 2009 as a result of a Municipal election.

Community Government - 2009 include:

Mayor: Jane E. Hobart

Senior Administrative Officer: John Holland

Council: Sheila Sauteur-Chadwick, Ron Holtorf, Claudette James, Brenda Johnson, Brad Marta, Bernie Minute, Kevin Smith, Chris Westwell.

Municipal Council meets the 4th Tuesday of each month and Committee of the whole meets on the 2nd Tuesday.

The following are Advisory Committees and Standing Committees of Town Council:

- Human Resources Standing Committee
- Municipal Services Standing Committee
- Community Services Standing Committee
- Finance and Audit Standing Committee
- Corporate Services Standing Committee
- Library Board
- Recreation Advisory Board
- Sustainability
- Tourism Advisory Board
-

The Town is challenged in some areas including its location "at the end of the road", the condition of the roads, drugs and alcohol issues, unsightly properties, lack of services for visitors and residents and a lack of community unity. In addition, the population projections indicate a slight drop in population by 2012.



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Goals, Strategies and Action Plan

Goal A: Operate an open, transparent and effective government

Strategy	Activity
Provide strong legislation.	Review all bylaws, policies and procedures to ensure effectiveness and relevance.
	Create new bylaws as required.
Utilize many methods of communication.	Hold an Annual General Meeting to inform and consult the public on town issues. Provide information about ICSP implementation.
	Regularly update and review Town's website.
	Continue profiling Town staff, Mayor, councilors and community volunteers in newsletter.
	Build the Open House (ideasFortSmith) into an annual event with manned displays and opportunities for public input.
	Review and update ICSP on a regular basis.

Goal B: Provide excellent municipal programs and services to the citizens.

Strategy	Activity
Implement an asset management system.	Purchase and implement works management software; inventory all assets.
Evaluate the delivery of all programs and services.	Conduct an organizational review.
	Conduct a capital asset review.
	Conduct a program/service review.

Goal C: Continue as a responsible employer

Strategy	Activity
Ensure compliance with collective agreement, labour standards and practices.	Conduct a job evaluation and classification study.
	Review and update all personnel policies.
Provide a safe workplace	Assess current qualifications. Train staff as required for their area of employment.
	Conduct monthly safety committee meetings and act on recommendations.
Improve communication with employees.	Conduct regular Senior Management committee meetings.
	Include staff participation on standing committees.
	Organize regular staff and council social activities.
	Highlight department staff in the monthly newsletter.



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Goal D: Preserve, advocate and enhance the natural environment in the Town.

Strategy	Activity
Evaluate and assess green/open spaces to ensure they meet future requirements.	Review Recreation Master Plan to include a trail and park enhancement strategy.
	Trail development - areas to be considered: share the trail, promotion and signage, bike routing and trails, motorized and non-motorized trails; upgrade existing trails and increased snowmobile trails.
Advocate to address Slide Zone issues.	As this area is owned by the GNWT, work with GNWT to address slide zone issues.

Goal E: Maintain a safe community.

Strategy	Activity
Ensure increased and stronger bylaw enforcement.	Review Bylaws to ensure they are effective and up-to-date.
	Provide additional bylaw training.
	Assess bylaw resources.
Support the provisions of protective services.	Consult with volunteer fire and ambulance departments.
	Provide adequate resources to meet service requirements.
Implement Firesmart program.	Implement fire abatement projects in a timely manner while respecting budgetary constraints.
	Conduct campaign to ensure public participation and awareness program for fire abatement.
Ensure community wide emergency preparedness.	Review, update and practice EMO plan.
Maintain partnership with RCMP.	Continue communication and relationship building.
Ensure pedestrian and vehicular safety.	Safety audit of roads, sidewalks and streetlights.



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Goal F: Promote our status as the education capital of the Northwest Territories.

Strategy	Activity
Seek out ways to advocate for Fort Smith's educational focus.	Town to initiate discussion and meetings with government officials i.e. Round Table and public involvement; including discussions on the status of the University of the North.
Foster our relationship with Aurora College headquarters.	Host social event for Board of Governors.
	Regular communication with the Office of the President.
	Regular communication with Campus Director.
	Offer awards for Aurora College students; assist Campus to market the community and college.
	Participate in Graduation activities, Aurora College week, orientation week, student appreciation week.
	Appoint a Council liaison person.
Foster relationship with JBT/PWK.	Offer student awards.
	Support lunch and crosswalk programs.
	Review and update Joint Use Agreement.
	Provide tournament support.
Provide support for pre-school programs.	Provide support as requested.
Participate on the District Education Authority.	Appoint 3 members to the DEA with regular reporting back to Council.

Goal G: Promote sustainable environmental practices in our community.

Strategy	Activity
Provide for an implementation strategy for the Community Energy Plan.	Implement the Community Energy Plan.
Undertake a landfill/solid waste management study to include recycling and opportunities for salvaging.	Landfill Management Study including recycling opportunities.
Strive for sustainable energy sources. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from Town facilities/vehicles.	Implement Community Energy Plan.
Educate the public in the benefits of sustainable environmental practices.	Implement Community Energy Plan.
Maintain Community Energy Plan.	Regularly Review and update plan.
	Re-establish Sustainable Development Advisory Board.



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Goal H: Foster a strong cohesive community spirit.

Strategy	Activity
Improve communication and dialogue with other levels of government including government agencies and boards.	Regular meetings with Salt River First Nations and Fort Smith's Métis Council to discuss areas of common concern.
Recognize and support the work of volunteers.	Profiling volunteers on Web Site.
	Special awards for youth, elders and other special targeted areas.
Work with First Nations governments to implement Municipal Service Agreements.	Formation of Joint Planning & Coordinating committees with SRFN.
	Finalize SLFN MSA.
	Support Métis with land claim negotiations.
Foster partnerships with other agencies & organizations.	Regular communication with and support of groups.
Improve communication within the community.	Develop Communication Strategy.

Goal I : Maintain a healthy, active community

Strategy	Activity
Increase community wellness and overall health, which includes active recreation, outdoor life and healthy eating.	Review and update Recreation Master Plan.
	Re-establish Recreation Advisory Board.
Upgrade and enhance recreation facilities and programs including outdoor opportunities and the Recreation Centre.	Recreation Centre upgrading, increased programming and management plan. Plan to include increased programs and events. Theater and gym are areas that require immediate attention.
	Upgrade Arena - ice plant, energy efficiency and maintenance areas.
	Longer term - New Arena Feasibility Study to include location and opportunities for multi use.
Provide ways to increase activities for youth including movies, a range of educational activities, outdoor opportunities and cultural exchange events.	Town Council to initiate a Youth Advisory board to provide information and support for youth issues in the Town.
Foster relationship with Fort Smith Health & Social Services.	Appoint two members to the Board with regular reporting back to Council; regular meetings with Board.
Respect elders and disabled citizens.	Ensure accessibility, continue tax relief program, support Senior 55+ Friendship Games, continue Elder of the Year award, support recreational programs, support societies.



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Goal J : Grow our residential and business community

Strategy	Activity
Encourage and promote diversity of housing choice and costs within the Town.	Town to examine housing supply and begin discussions with government agencies to understand how the town can assist with housing supply for people working in the mines and living in Fort Smith. Discussions to include ways to assist with increasing the rental housing supply by reviewing barriers to potential development of residential & rental housing. Explore incentives to promote development.
Attract new residents and businesses to the community.	Develop Community Marketing and Promotion programs.
	Review Zoning bylaw.
Grow the community with planned land development.	Develop new sub-division(s).
Prepare for development of Salt River First Nation Reserve Land.	Evaluate Town infrastructure to ensure capacity to accommodate possible needs for municipal services.
Prepare for future land claims.	Communicate with groups in negotiation of land claims.

Goal K: Promote Fort Smith as a desirable destination.

Strategy	Activity
Embark on a strong Tourism promotion campaign stressing, location, quality of life, outdoor life and facilities.	Tourism Marketing Plan to include implementation strategy.
Work with other agencies to encourage visitors, professionals and students to come to the community.	Assist with recruitment programs.
	Support community sporting, arts & cultural events/festivals.
	Support museum & historical programs and their programs.

In addition to the Strategic Plan listed above, there are three additional plans that form the Integrated Sustainability Plan for the Town of Fort Smith.

- Community Energy Plan
- Human Resource Plan
- Capital Investment Plan

To be as environmentally responsible as possible, these plans will be available on the Town's website at www.fortsmith.ca on May 3. Should you wish a paper copy, please contact the Town Hall at 872-8400.