Integrated Community Sustainability Plan

PARKLAND
COUNTY
Where Opportunity Awaits

Table of Contents

Message from the Mayor

Parkland County's Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) will play a significant role in advancing a long-term strategy that will ensure a healthy, vibrant and prosperous community. Inextricably linked to Parkland County's Strategic Plan, the ICSP will provide the framework and foundation to address challenges we face not only locally, but globally.

Climate change. Diminishing non-renewable resources. The destruction of natural habitat. These and other issues must be considered when undertaking daily activities and planning for the future. Through our daily routine and practices, Parkland County will strive to minimize its footprint through initiatives such as green purchasing policies, minimizing energy use, recycling programs, water conservation, and planning and development strategies that protect the environment.

The realization of a sustainable community and its long-term benefits will not be without challenges; sacrifices will be required. Fundamental changes are essential and the disposition of long-held beliefs and practices must be discharged. Individual actions will contribute to collective solutions – together we can influence change and create a positive future within and beyond the boundaries of Parkland County.

Our goal is to create an environment that meets the needs of current residents and businesses without compromising future generations. Through a public consultation process that included open houses, we have identified a number of priorities and goals that will be undertaken to fulfill our commitment to our rate payers.

Parkland County will establish itself as a municipal leader in sustainability. Through innovation, dedication and commitment to our future, Parkland County will continue its efforts in ensuring a high quality of life that is reflected in a robust and vibrant economy and cherished social life. Parkland County Council and staff look forward to celebrating the successes of our ICSP in the years ahead.

Mayor Rod Shaigec
August 2011

About Parkland County

Parkland County is a rural municipality with easy access to big city amenities. Immediately west of Edmonton, the County boasts a charming mix of agricultural, residential, industrial, commercial and recreational opportunities. Parkland County is home to a population of over 30,000 and sees generations of families continue to enjoy country living.

Committed to maintaining an environment where families can grow and enjoy life, Parkland County partners with local organizations and surrounding municipalities to offer programs and services that contribute to vibrant communities and create a sense of unity and pride among residents. Parkland County's dedication to fostering many opportunities for County residents is evident simply through the number of cost sharing agreements, such as the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre and the Horizon Stage in Spruce Grove, the Multicultural Centre and Pioneer Museum in Stony Plain, and a variety of pools and arenas throughout the region.

As our name suggests, we are host to a wide range of parks and recreation opportunities. Parkland County is home to four primary parks and some of Alberta's most scenic lakes and campgrounds. It is not necessary to travel far from home as Parkland County offers camping, fishing, hiking, skiing, boating and much more. Facilities such as Chickakoo Lake Recreation Area, Kokomoko Park, Entwistle Outdoor Pool and the Meridian Sports Park offer everything from picnicking, swimming, and mountain biking to cross-country skiing. Parkland County is a popular destination for golfers, with 17 golf courses in the region, eight of which are rated as top calibre courses.

Parkland County also boasts a variety of tourism prospects. The Devonian Botanic Gardens, owned and operated by the University of Alberta, is world-renowned for its splendour. Sites such as the Wagner Natural Area and the Clifford E. Lee Nature Sanctuary allow visitors opportunities to take peaceful hikes with a tremendous view.

Parkland County values the growth and security of residents, and therefore offers a wide range of protective services, including a first-rate 9-1-1 Emergency Communications Centre. Educational opportunities are plentiful, with 22 public schools, five catholic schools and easy access to secondary institutions.

Regardless of an individual's lifestyle needs, Parkland County offers clean and quiet living, tremendous attractions, a thriving industry, plenty of conveniences and breathtaking surroundings.

Integrated Community Sustainability Plan

In 2005, The New Deal for Cities and Communities – now referred to as the Federal Gas Tax Fund - was signed between the federal government of Canada and the province of Alberta. The Fund is a $33 billion, 7-year infrastructure improvement plan intended to provide municipalities with "funding for strategic investments in projects designed to produce results in three areas of national importance: a growing economy, a clean environment, and strong and prosperous communities." The ultimate goal of the program is to "promote strong, sustainable, competitive and liveable Canadian communities."

In order to qualify for their portion of the gas tax revenues, the federal government requires municipalities to develop an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) to ensure the community's long term economic, social/cultural, governance and environmental sustainability.

Parkland County viewed this as a unique opportunity to demonstrate its deep commitment to sustainability and developed its first ICSP in 2006. It has come time to review and update the ICSP. The new ICSP will demonstrate a commitment to be a "sustainability leader by example" and to become "the primary source for information on sustainability".

Why it Matters

The ICSP planning process requires Parkland County to take a balanced and holistic approach when planning for the future by incorporating its economic goals with its social, governance, and environmental goals so all four dimensions are maximized and no one goal is allowed to dominate the others. In other words, the ICSP asks the County to incorporate a quadruple bottom line into its planning regime so that its goals for its people, its government, its environment, and its economy are balanced against each other.

Secondly, the ICSP planning process is a prudent approach to ensuring the long term success of the County. By focusing far into the future, the ICSP allows Parkland County to create a flexible vision of its future, one that can be modified should circumstances warrant, but provides a general idea on where the County wants to be in 20 to 30 years. This allows Parkland County to deploy resources efficiently and in a way that is consistent with its long-term goals.

1   http://www.buildingcanada-chantierscanada.gc.ca/plandocs/bg-di/bg-di-info5-eng.html

2   http://www.buildingcanada-chantierscanada.gc.ca/plandocs/bg-di/bg-di-info3-eng.html

What is an ICSP?

An ICSP is "a long-term plan, developed in consultation with community members, which provides direction for the community to realize sustainability objectives it has for the environmental, social/cultural, governance and economic dimensions of its identity". *Infrastructure Canada 2007*
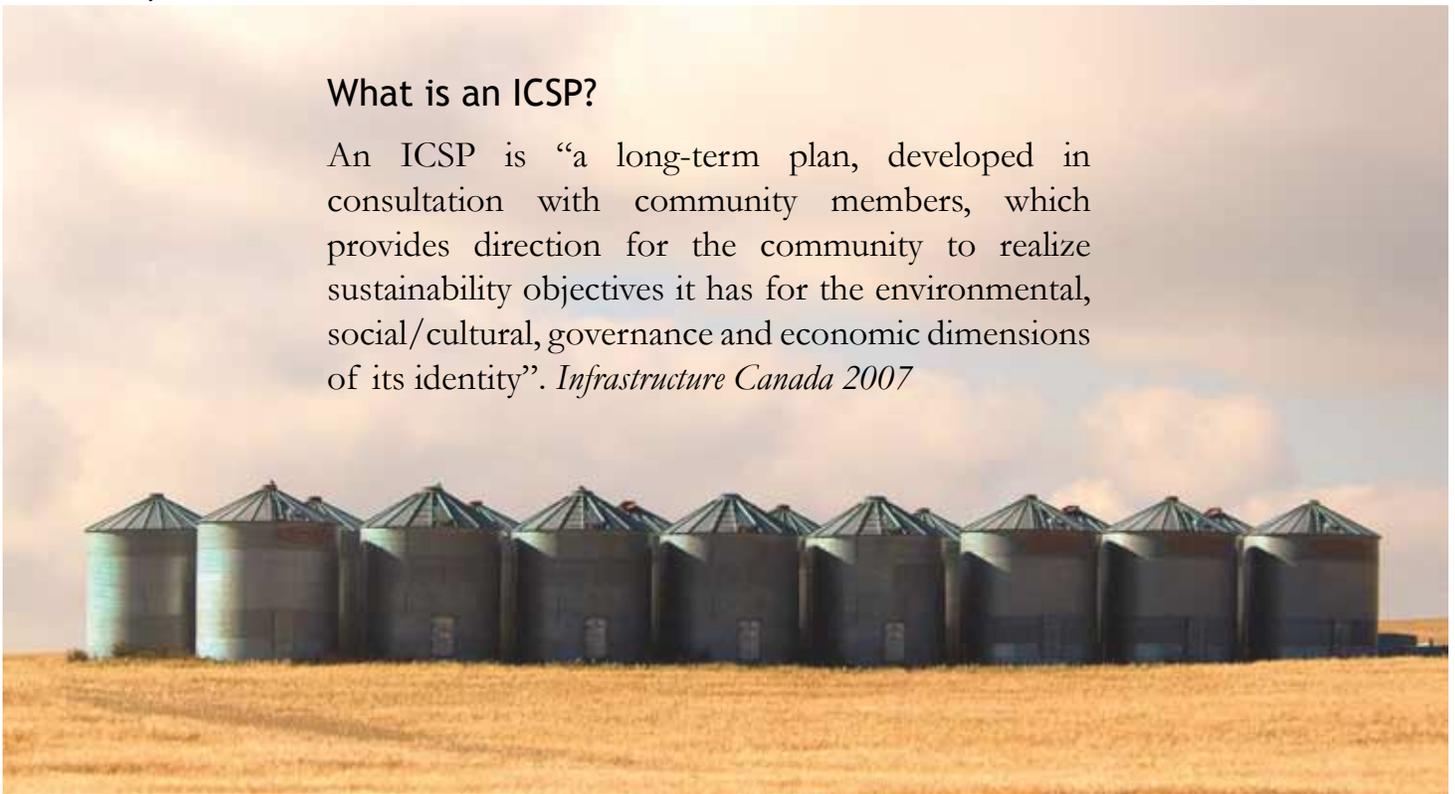
The Four Principles of Sustainability

While the Brundtland Report's definition of sustainability tells us what a sustainable society would look like, it does not tell us what we need to change to get there. To create this distinction, Parkland County adopted the definition of sustainability originally developed by The Natural Step Canada. This definition not only describes how a sustainable society would look, but also highlights the things we need to do to become more sustainable:

"In a sustainable society, nature is not subject to systematically increasing:

1. Concentrations of substances extracted from the earth's crust (oil and mined minerals)

2. Concentrations of substances produced by society (synthetic substances)

3. Degradation by physical means (i.e. deforestation)

and in that society…

4. People are not subject to conditions that systematically undermine their ability to meet their own needs."

Under this definition, a sustainable community is one that does not violate any of the four principles. Parkland County will seek continual improvements until it is fully aligned with the four principles of sustainability and can truly be considered a sustainable community.

Four Pillars of Sustainability:

1. Environmental

2. Economic development

3. Social and cultural life

4. Governance

While the four principles of sustainability act as the lens through which a community is assessed, the four pillars set the scope of the ICSP. A healthy environment, a growing economy, a vibrant social and cultural life, and an efficient and transparent governance structure are essential components of a prosperous community. Enhancing these in a coordinated manner is what sustainability planning is all about.

The ICSP process requires the County to look at the four pillars and then study each of them to find anything in existing practices that support or violate any of the four principles of sustainability.

Anything found to violate any of the four sustainability principles is considered a sustainability challenge and a corresponding solution is developed to address the challenge, with priority given to the biggest and most easily-addressed violations.

What is Sustainability?

One of the most widely-accepted definitions of sustainability is the one contained in the 1987 *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report.

It defines sustainability "as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." [3]

[3] http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm

Process:

In order to complete the ICSP review within the timeframe, a custom process was designed by combining elements of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association's (AUMA) Municipal Sustainability Planning Fast Track Guide with elements from The Natural Step Canada's Integrated Community Sustainability Planning – A Guide[5.] The process contained four key steps:

1. **Structuring the process**

  a. Define sustainability, define the scope (four pillars of sustainability),

  b. Develop the review process.

2. **Baseline analysis (current reality)**

  a. Identify sustainability challenges: each of the four pillars is studied to find "sustainability challenges" – things that violate the definition of sustainability.

  b. Identify priority areas: Rank the sustainability challenges: higher priority areas will have more violations and more severe violations than lower priority areas.

3. **Vision (ideal state)**

  a. Identify a future in which all sustainability challenges are fully resolved

4. **Action Plan**

  a. Identify actions, initiatives and programs to implement to address the sustainability challenges, focusing on the priority areas.

For a more detailed description of the ICSP review process Parkland County employed, please refer to Appendix 1.

4 http://www.auma.ca/live/digitalAssets/9/9973_AUMA_MSP_Initiative_Phase_2_Report.pdf

5 http://www.thenaturalstep.org/en/Canada/download-form

Identifying Sustainability Challenges

Guiding Principles

Parkland County strives to become a sustainable community that provides enhanced quality of life by balancing conservation of its natural environment with economic prosperity, lifestyle choices and sound governance.

Parkland County adopts the following principles to ensure the high quality of life currently enjoyed is enhanced for current and future generations:

Economic development:

• Encourage sustainable growth through the promotion of compact residential developments, resource conservation, and the promotion of green industry.

Environment:

• Protect our natural capital by implementing solutions to conserve, restore and enhance the County's environment.

Governance:

• Conduct County affairs in a transparent, accessible, and pro-active manner that is responsive to the needs, concerns and interests of residents.

Social/cultural life:

• Seek continual enhancements to the County's quality of life by promoting its proud cultural heritage, enhancing the County's recreational options, and by supporting the County's community organizations.

Public Participation

The first goal of the public participation process was to inform the public about the ICSP, its origins, the intent of the document, the reason for the document review, and about sustainability in general. The second goal was to seek input from residents, stakeholders and local businesses on matters relating to the County's environmental, economic, governance and social/cultural sustainability. More specifically, participants were asked to identify:

• What they value about living in Parkland County;

• Existing barriers that prevent people from living a more sustainable lifestyle; and

• Initiatives that Parkland County can implement to encourage people to choose a more sustainable lifestyle.

Priority Areas

The priority areas for the ICSP were identified during the baseline analysis. Each of the four pillars of sustainability was studied to find areas that went against the definition of sustainability (sustainability challenges). Parkland County identified almost 100 sustainability challenges in this initial stage. Priority areas were then identified by assessing the significance of each sustainability challenge and grouping together similar challenges. Areas with the highest numbers and/or the most significant sustainability challenges were ranked as priority focus areas for the ICSP.

The priority areas are as outlined below:

For a detailed analysis of the value that public participation brought to the ICSP review process, please see Appendix 2.

Priority Areas
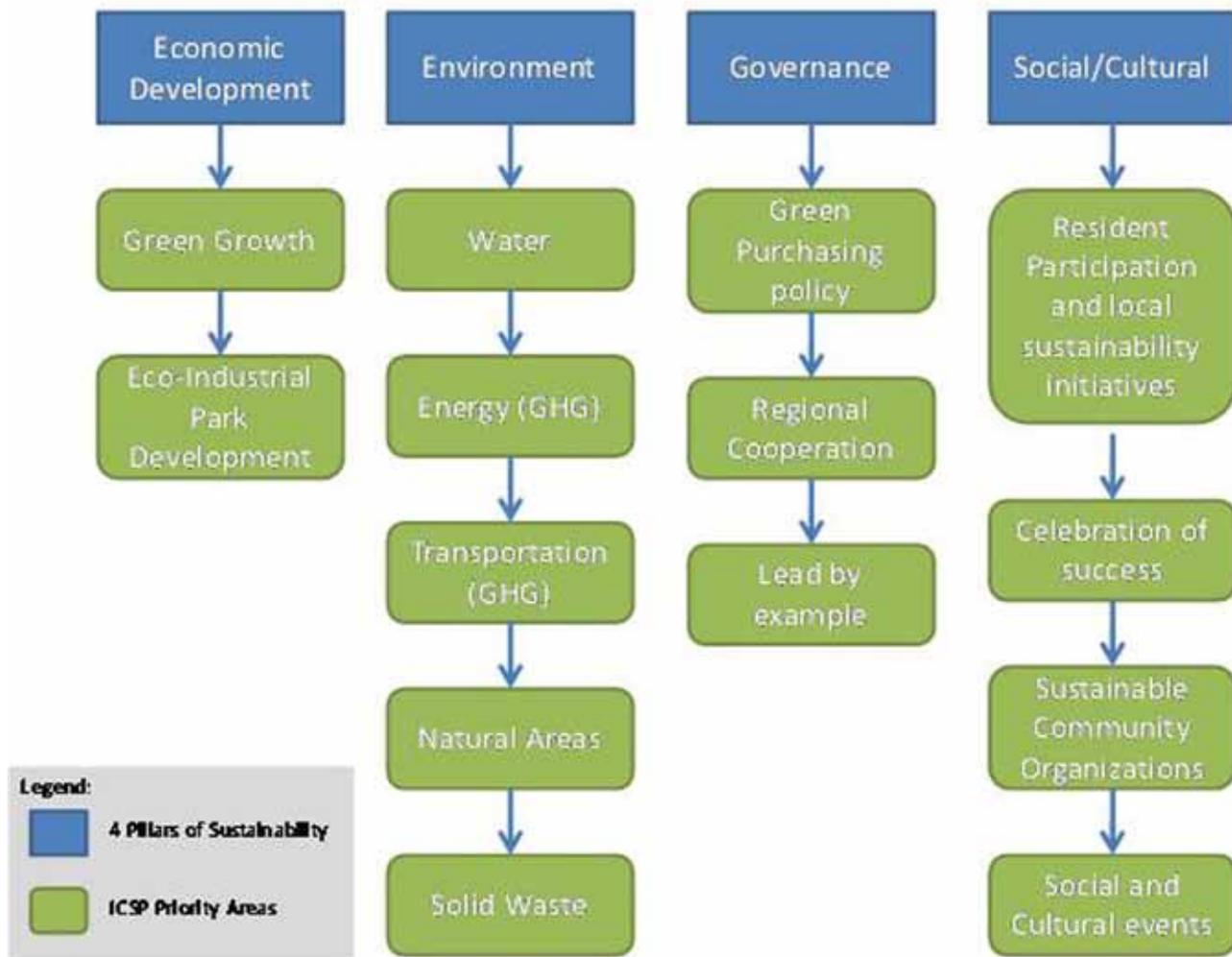
Integration

As mentioned in the Message from the Mayor, one of the primary functions of the ICSP is to act as a blueprint for reaching many of the goals that Council established in the County's Strategic Plan 2011-2013.

As can be seen in Appendix 3, there are more than twenty direct linkages between the ICSP and the Strategic Plan, including the priority focus areas of both plans. Indeed, both plans highlight economic development, governance, environment, and quality of life (social and cultural life) as strategic focus areas, with the Strategic Plan laying out the broad goals that can be partially or fully met by implementing the corresponding ICSP initiative.

Plan integration is important for Parkland County as it demonstrates that Parkland County has a unified vision of the future, ensuring that departmental efforts are directed towards the same goals.

Prioritization and the Role of the Environmental Advisory Committee

This ICSP has been designed to be read as a menu, which means that no prioritization has been done in terms of the initiatives it contains. This responsibility will be assigned to the newly-established Environmental Advisory Committee, whose tasks will include prioritizing ICSP goals and resulting initiatives based on the following criteria:

- Ease of implementation

- Impact the initiative will have in terms of moving closer to sustainability

- Budgeting requirements, and

- Resource and staffing requirements.

While Parkland County is fully committed to ensuring that initiatives are implemented to meet the goals of this plan, it will first focus on those goals and initiatives that have been identified as priorities by the Environmental Advisory Committee.

Implementation

In order to implement the ICSP, Parkland County Administration will develop an implementation plan, assigning responsibility to County departments to develop and integrate into operational practices appropriate to meet the goals identified in the ICSP. The implementation plan will further outline the key milestones that must be reached and also contains relevant information that will assist the department in reaching the goals.

Reporting

Parkland County has long been committed to transparency and honest reporting. To ensure it remains accountable for implementing the ICSP, Parkland County will publish quarterly progress reports.

The progress reports will highlight the progress, the successes, and the challenges that Parkland County encountered while implementing the ICSP. Parkland County believes this type of reporting will keep the ICSP on the forefront of everyone's mind - Parkland County staff, Council, and residents alike.

For an example of the table that will be used to report progress, please refer to Appendix 1.

Pillar 1 - Environment

Reducing our impact on the environment is one of the most important challenges of our time, and maintaining a healthy natural environment is a collective responsibility that we owe to future generations. As a result, Parkland County is committed to reducing the impact of its operations on the environment, and to encourage residents and businesses alike to reduce their impacts as well. In order to do so, Parkland County will direct its resources to the following priority areas identified during the baseline analysis: Energy, Transportation, Water, Solid Waste and Natural Areas.

Sustainability strengths:

The high-quality of Parkland County's natural environment is one of its most prized assets. It features a number of parks including: Wagner Natural Area, Clifford E. Lee Nature Sanctuary, Pembina River Provincial Park, Wabamun Provincial Park, and Lois Hole Provincial Provincial Park. Parkland County also has a large number of lakes, trails, and top notch outdoor recreation facilities that provide residents and non-residents with ample recreational opportunities. In order to help preserve the County's natural environment for future generations, Parkland County will be establishing the Environmental Advisory Committee to oversee the County's environmental initiatives.

Sustainability Challenges:

Greenhouse Gases: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere represent one of the most pressing challenges of our time. Parkland County understands this and believes in working hard to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, we will be working to reduce emissions associated with our operations as much as possible, focusing on two priority areas - energy and transportation - and encourage members of the community to do the same.

Water: Protecting the County's water resources is a key challenge facing Parkland County. From ground water to lakes, rivers and wetlands, many, if not all, of Parkland County's water resources are at risk of degradation from increasingly intensive human activity.

Ground water resources are at risk of being used beyond their capacity. They are also at risk of contamination from such things as manure, fertilizer, petroleum, and other synthetic substances.

Parkland County's lakes, rivers and wetlands are also at risk of contamination (industrial, agricultural, residential, municipal sources), degradation, or complete elimination as they are drained to make way for new developments or to expand the amount of productive crop land.

To reduce the negative impacts on our water resources, Parkland County will undertake a number of initiatives with the following goals in mind:

- Reducing water consumption
- Reducing the amount of contaminants in wastewater.

While Parkland County has direct control over the water it uses, it has no control over the water-use habits of the wider community. Finding effective ways to encourage the community to adopt a more water-friendly lifestyle will remain a key challenge for Parkland County.

Solid Waste: Solid waste management represents a significant environmental challenge for Parkland County. Because of its large size and low population density, Parkland County faces significantly higher-per-household garbage collection costs than municipalities with more concentrated population centres. This is the primary reason why the County has not been able to implement a county-wide curbside garbage collection service and instead established the transfer station solid waste collection system.

While the transfer station system remains the best option given the geographical and financial constraints of the County, there remain opportunities for improvement in terms of the amount of recyclable and compostable materials that can be diverted from the landfill.

The same can be said about the waste generated by Parkland County's operations. Various factors - such as a shortage of recycling bins – have led to a higher proportion of recyclables and compostable items ending up in the landfill.

Parkland County's challenge in this area is to increase the diversion rate of recyclables and compostable items from residential and operational sources to the highest degree possible.

Natural Areas: From the degradation of riparian areas along and edges of water bodies to the physical destruction of environmentally significant hotspots, Parkland County faces a number of challenges regarding its natural areas. The baseline analysis enabled the County to identify the following priority challenges:

- Limiting damages caused by intensive and unauthorized vehicle use.

- Retrofitting the County's recreational facilities with environmentally friendly appliances and chemicals.

- Finding ways to slow down and ultimately reverse the destruction of both undesignated and designated environmentally-significant areas.

Fully addressing these issues will require dedicated and ongoing commitment from both the County and its residents.

Action Plan Goals & Strategies

Priority area: Energy

Goal 1: Minimize energy related green house gas emissions generated by Parkland County operations

Strategies:

1.1 Perform an energy audit at the County Centre and all other public buildings

1.2 Implement the recommendations of the energy audit

1.3 Replacement of conventional electrical appliances with high efficiency appliances

1.4 Increase the percentage of electricity used by the County Centre that is generated from renewable sources

1.5 Showcase one or more renewable technologies at County facilities

Goal 2: Minimize energy related green house gas emissions generated by residences and businesses

Strategies:

2.1 Bulk Purchase of High Efficiency light bulbs (LED lighting) and sell at cost to County residents

2.2 Educate residents regarding the benefits of high efficiency appliances & available incentives

2.3 Educate residents on the benefits of using renewable energy & possibility of purchasing up to 100% renewable electricity.

Priority area: Transportation

Goal 3: Minimize transportation related green house gas emissions generated by Parkland County Operations

Strategies:

3.1 Replacement of full-sized office vehicles with compact hybrid vehicles, where possible

3.2 Research and replacement of vehicle fleet with environmentally friendly alternatives, where/when possible

3.3 Implement the GPS based tire management system for the County's vehicle fleet

3.4 Recycle all vehicle fluids and tires generated by the County's vehicle fleet

3.5 Implement GPS based fuel savings program for the County's vehicle fleet

3.6 Implement a life-cycle purchasing criteria for vehicle and machinery purchases

3.7 Replacement of 2-cycle equipment with more environmentally friendly equipment

Goal 4: Minimize transportation related green house gas emissions generated by residences and businesses

Strategies:

4.1 Implement a web-based carpooling facilitation service

4.2 Educate residents on low GHG transportation alternatives

4.3 Educate business operators on low GHG transportation alternatives

Priority area: Water

Goal 5: Minimize water used by County operations; minimize waste water volume; minimize water contamination.

Strategies:

5.1 Replacement of conventional water appliances and faucets with high efficiency water faucets and appliances.

5.2 Setup a rain barrel demonstration project (to be done in conjunction with initiatives 7.3 and 12.1).

5.3 Use organic and natural fertilizers and pesticides on County-owned land

Goal 6: Minimize water used by residents, agriculture and businesses; minimize waste water volume; minimize water contamination.

Strategies:

6.1 Look into supplementing the federal low-flow faucet/appliance incentive program

6.2 Educate residents on the benefits of switching to low-flow faucets and high efficiency appliances i.e. Energy Star

6.3 Bulk rain barrel purchase and sell at cost to County residents

6.4 Grey water recycling: lobby higher levels of government to eliminate restriction

6.5 Educate residents on the benefits of using organic and natural fertilizers and pesticides

Priority area: Solid Waste

Goal 7: Minimize the amount of waste that is generated by County operations and maximize the diversion rate of recyclables.

Strategies:

7.1 Pair every garbage bin with a recycling bin at the County facilities

7.2 Embed recycling in employee culture through an education campaign

7.3 Composting demonstration project: install composting bins for lunch waste at the County buildings and setup a demonstration composting facility at the County Centre (to be done in conjunction with initiatives 5.2 and 12.1).

7.4 Install recycling bins at all County-run recreational facilities

Goal 8: Minimize the amount of waste that is generated by residents and maximize the diversion rate of recyclables.

Strategies:

8.1 Encourage reuse: implement a "freecycle"-type section on the County website that allows residents to post adds for gently-used goods they no longer need

8.2 Implement a card-based system that tracks waste generated per-household at County-run transfer stations

8.3 Embed recycling in residential culture through an education campaign

8.4 Explore the potential for facilitating "garbage pooling" (carpooling to the transfer stations)

8.5 Purchase a bulk order of composters and sell them at cost to County residents

8.6 Explore the potential for accepting compostables at transfer stations

Priority area: Natural areas

Goal 9: Minimize the environmental footprint of Parkland County's recreational facilities.

Strategies:

9.1 Implement an efficient appliance replacement program for County-run recreational facilities

9.2 Explore the potential for using a chlorine substitute for the Entwistle pool

9.3 Use of organic substitute for treating outhouses at County-run recreational facilities

9.4 Establish and enforce a regulation that outlaws the dumping of residential garbage at recreational sites

9.5 Educate residents on the establishment of the new regulation mentioned in 1.40

Goal 10: Minimize the damages caused by vehicles, horses and pedestrians in environmentally sensitive areas

Strategies:

10.1 Educate boaters about the environmental damages caused by careless boating

10.2 Explore the potential for establishing an OHV park

10.3 Educate residents on the environmental damages caused by careless use of OHVs

10.4 Establish dedicated horse trails

10.5 Educate residents on the environmental damages caused by careless horse riding

Goal 11: Minimize the destruction of water ways, wetlands, and riparian areas.

Strategies:

11.1 Establish conservation partnerships between the County and conservation organizations to protect environmentally sensitive areas on County-owned land

11.2 Educate landowners on the multiple options that exist for conserving environmentally significant features on their properties.

11.3 Explore potential for setting up a demonstration wetland conservation pilot project (ALUS project) within the County.

Goal 12: Showcase the benefits of sustainable gardening and sustainable farming to residents of Parkland County.

Strategies:

12.1 Setup a demonstration garden at the County Centre: enrich soil with compost from lunch room, water from demonstration rain barrel (to be done in conjunction with initiatives 5.2 and 7.3).

12.2 Work with Green Hectares to setup a demonstration farm within the County to showcase sustainable farming practices.

Pillar 2 - Economic Development

A sustainable economy is a key condition for bringing the dream of a sustainable society to life. A sustainable economy is one reliant on a closed-loop material cycle as opposed to a linear material cycle, one in which growth is sustained through intelligent management, and one which provides secure long-term employment to members of the community.

Conventional resource-based economies are more susceptible to market conditions for maintaining employment levels: as long as the market price of the resource increases, or is at least maintained, employment levels will grow or remain constant. But if the market price for the resource falls low enough, employment levels fall as well, which in turn negatively affects the ability of that community to sustain itself.

While it is true that no economy has yet been able to attain the status of sustainable economy, Parkland County understands the importance of transitioning towards a sustainable economy today, so the high quality of life that residents currently enjoy be maintained and enhanced for future generations.

Sustainability Strengths:

Parkland County is blessed with a robust and diversified economy. With a historically-significant and thriving agricultural sector, a vibrant business and industrial park, one of the lowest tax rates in the region, a large selection of fully serviced lots, close proximity to the provincial capital and access to major transportation routes, Parkland County's economy is poised for sustained long-term economic growth.

For over six years, Parkland County has been employing what have become known as Smart Growth Principles and Urban by Design Principles. Integration of these principles has enabled the County to expand in a way that is much more environmentally, economically, and socially/culturally sustainable than the previous conventional growth models.

Sustainability Challenges:

New residential, commercial, industrial and institutional building construction: The construction of new buildings using conventional building techniques, materials and appliances represents a significant sustainability challenge for the County.

Adding to the challenge is the fact that environmentally friendly alternatives are in most cases more expensive than their conventional counterparts. As a result, a large proportion of new buildings continue to be built using cheaper but less environmentally-friendly materials and techniques. Therefore, encouraging the development of new buildings that are environmentally-friendly will figure as a priority challenge for Parkland County in the years to come.

Retrofitting: The majority of buildings constructed until prior to the last 15 years were designed and built with little attention paid to environmental side-effects. The result is a large number of publicly and privately-owned buildings whose environmental performance could be improved by retrofitting them with environmentally-friendly alternatives.

However, since most green products are more expensive than their conventional alternatives, their use is not widespread. Encouraging the retrofitting of existing buildings with environmentally-friendly alternatives will remain a significant challenge for Parkland County in the future.

Eco-Industrial Business Park: As the environmental conscience of consumers has grown over the last few decades, so has the demand for environmentally-friendly products and services. This has led to an increased number of companies that built their businesses on the idea that limiting environmental degradation is good for business.

As a consequence, these businesses place a very high priority on reducing their emissions and waste streams to the highest extent possible. This not only improves their image in the eyes of consumers, it also provides tangible benefits to their surrounding environment.

Parkland County recognizes the economic, social and environmental benefits that green businesses can provide our community and has worked hard over the years to encourage green businesses to locate in the County.

However, many other municipalities are trying to do the same thing since they also recognize the value that green businesses bring their community. Therefore, maintaining

a competitive edge in terms of what we do to attract green businesses to Parkland County will remain a key challenge for Parkland County.

Action Plan Goals & Strategies
Priority area: Green growth

Goal 13: Minimize environmental effects associated with growing Parkland County's economic base

Strategies:

13.1 Incorporate Low Impact Design (LID) principles in all new qualifying developments

13.2 Incorporate Smart Growth Principles in all new qualifying developments

13.3 Educate residents on the benefits of using renewable and recyclable materials in new building construction

13.4 Explore options for establishing Parkland County's Greenest Builder of the Year award

13.5 Explore the possibility of establishing an expedited permitting process for green builders: priority permitting, priority inspections, priority access to County staff etc.

13.6 Create a web-based demonstration that compares a conventionally built home with a green-built home and which highlights the benefits of building green.

13.7 Encourage an established green developer to build a green development in Parkland County

13.8 Implement a green building standard for all publicly-owned buildings: new construction and renovations

13.9 Educate residents on the various options they have with regards to retrofitting their homes with green alternatives

13.10 Educate residents on the availability of provincial and federal incentives for green home retrofitting projects

Priority area: Eco-industrial Park

Goal 14: Encourage the establishment of an Eco-Industrial business park in Parkland County

14.1 Implement a web-based voluntary "trash-clearinghouse" for industry– companies may voluntarily advertize their waste streams online in order to attract other companies that would utilize that waste as a feedstock for their products.

14.2 Explore and implement a development charge discount program for green industry

Other initiatives: Brownfield redevelopment

14.3 Explore the applicability of establishing a Brownfield redevelopment program in Parkland County and implement the program as needed.

Pillar 3 - Governance

An efficient, transparent, pro-active and responsive government is a right that is owed to every citizen in a democratic society and is a key condition that a community must meet while transitioning towards sustainability. This is because planning for sustainability requires that long-term, forward thinking, efficient decision-making, innovation, and creativity be exhibited by the local government while envisioning a better future for all members of the community. A poorly-run government, on the other hand, through the neglect of its responsibilities, regularly causes conditions that prevent certain people or certain groups of people from meeting their needs. In other words, a well-run government is conducive to sustainability while a poorly run government tends to promote unsustainable practices.

As a result of its deep commitment to sustainability, Parkland County is constantly seeking new ways to increase the performance of its already world-class governance model.

Sustainability Strengths:

Parkland County is a fiscally stable municipal government dedicated to inclusive, pro-active and future-thinking decision making in all of its operations. Sustainability was made a County priority in 2006 and, since then, the concept has been integrated into the County's long term plans including the Municipal Development Plan 2007-2011, the Strategic Plan 2011-13, and this ICSP.

Sustainability Challenges:

Non-universal Internet access: One of the central tenets of democratic theory is that effective democracy requires an informed public. Parkland County recognizes the role that electronic media plays in informing our daily lives - the Internet now acts as the primary source of news for a large number of Canadians. As a result, Parkland County is dedicated to increasing the number of residents that have access to high-speed Internet through its ongoing Intelligent Community project. This will remain a key sustainability challenge.

Lead by Example: Parkland County understands the importance of setting an example when attempting to influence residents and businesses to adopt more sustainable practices. Indeed, any efforts on the part of Parkland County to promote sustainability would be seriously undermined if it did not follow the advice it gives to others.

It is important that Parkland County implement the solutions it suggests others to adopt. This will also allow Parkland County to demonstrate the tangible environmental benefits derived by implementing the solution as well as any economic benefits that may arise. Maintaining the lead in terms of example-setting will remain a key sustainability challenge for Parkland County.

Regional Cooperation: Parkland County has long recognized the value of inter-municipal cooperation and has worked with its municipal neighbours on a number of highly-successful cooperative initiatives, including the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre and cost-share agreements for a variety of other cultural and recreational facilities.

Based on this success, Parkland County is looking to extend regional cooperation to the realm of sustainability and will be working with its municipal and First Nations neighbours to forge a cooperative sustainability arrangement.

Green Purchasing Policy: One of the most impactful changes an organization can do to minimize its effect on the environment is to implement a green purchasing policy. Green products have a number of benefits over conventional products:

- They are made with less environmentally-damaging materials.
- They consume less energy than their conventional counterparts.
- They are more easily recycled.
- They have a longer lifetime.

Parkland County understands the impact of its purchasing decisions on the environment and has identified the need for a green purchasing policy.

Although a green purchasing policy has been implemented, the challenge still remains with the cost of green products generally being more expensive than their conventional counterparts.

Parkland County has addressed this key sustainability challenge by establishing within the green purchasing policy a higher cost-cap that specifies how much more can be spent on green products.

Action Plan Goals & Strategies

Priority area: Green Purchasing Policy

Goal 15: Minimize Parkland County's environmental footprint associated with the purchase of goods and services.

Strategies:

15.1 Implement a green purchasing policy for Parkland County

15.2 Implement a 15% higher cost cap for green products to address the fact that many green products are more expensive than their conventional counterparts

15.3 Implement a centralized purchasing policy for all goods and services purchased by Parkland County

15.4 Educate employees on the effects that purchasing habits can have on the County's environmental footprint

Priority area: Regional Cooperation

Goal 16: Increase the level of cooperation between Parkland County, Spruce Grove and Stony Plain and First Nations on matters relating to sustainability

Strategies:

16.1 Establish a Regional Agreement on sustainability

Priority Area: Lead by Example

Goal 17: Parkland County demonstrates the value of implementing various green solutions to residents, businesses and the wider community

Strategies:

17.1 Parkland County leads by example in the following areas: building construction, renewable energy technologies, energy management, water management, waste management, vehicle management, green purchasing and organic gardening.

Other initiatives

Goal 18: Establish universal access to high speed internet service in Parkland County.

Strategies:

18.1 Implement the Intelligent Communities Project - focusing on the following programs: Funding, Rural Communications, Knowledgeable Workforce, Innovation, Digital Inclusion and Marketing.

Pillar 4 - Social and Cultural Life

As outlined in Parkland County's Strategic Plan 2011-2013, Council's greatest priority is to maintain and advance the quality of life for its residents.

As a result, Parkland County has worked hard over the years to support local organizations, to provide residents with a multitude of indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities, to support local art, to preserve the County's heritage, and to build up the capacity of the members of our community who organize and volunteer for social and cultural events. While the County has been quite successful in enhancing the vast majority of the aspects of its social and cultural scene, some issues have remained unresolved for various reasons, and new issues have appeared.

Fully addressing the County's social and cultural challenges will require sustained efforts on the part of Parkland County well into the future. The initiatives contained in this ICSP are concrete steps towards resolving many of the County's most persistent social and cultural challenges.

Community Sustainability strengths:

With a historically-significant agricultural heritage, 28 active community associations, numerous recreational facilities including baseball diamonds, soccer fields and the TransAlta Tri Leisure Centre, cost share agreements with its municipal neighbours for cultural facilities including the Multicultural Heritage Centre, Pioneer Museum and Horizon Stage, Parkland County offers social and cultural opportunities for everyone from every age group.

In addition, Parkland County has developed a support and capacity-building system for its community associations. Community development coordinators provide education and capacity building to community organizations upon request in the following areas: board development and facilitation, program and special event consultation, facility development and assessment, grant sourcing, and volunteer recognition. These services increase the likelihood that the County's community organizations, and it's social and cultural life in general, will remain vibrant for generations to come.

Community Sustainability Challenges:

Information on sustainability: Although it is true that everything everyone ever wanted to know about living a sustainable lifestyle does exist online in some form, getting a full and accurate picture of any topic can easily turn into a challenge.

Two issues routinely arise when conducting research on sustainability: different pieces of information are often found in different places, and valuable content is regularly intermixed with inaccurate or false information.

As a result, getting good quality and relevant information on a given topic related to sustainability can be difficult, and Parkland County recognizes this as a key sustainability challenge.

Rural Heritage and Culture: Maintaining the rural heritage, agricultural culture and way of life that has characterized Parkland County since its founding is a major sustainability challenge facing the County.

As with most municipalities adjacent to major urban centers, the County is faced with an increasing demand for more housing, more industry, more jobs and more recreational opportunities, all of which can act to dilute Parkland County's rural character if this growth is managed improperly. Parkland County's challenge will be to grow in ways that complement and enhance its heritage and way of life.

Maintaining volunteer base: Parkland County is home to 28 volunteer-based community associations that contribute significantly to the high quality of life for residents through various activities, functions and events. As is being experienced elsewhere, many of these organizations are facing a declining volunteer base due to factors including aging populations and flat population growth rates.

The shrinking volunteer base not only impacts the amount and quality of the activities that these groups organize, it also threatens their very existence. Parkland County understands the value of its community organizations and recognizes the declining volunteer base as a key sustainability challenge facing the County.

Maintaining community halls: A number of community halls within Parkland County are in need of renovations,

upgrades, and/or appliance replacements. Long-term financial stresses have limited the ability for renovations. Lack of funding has caused small problems encountered years ago to become bigger and more expensive.

Parkland County recognizes the long-term viability of community organizations, including the need for secure and reliable sources of funding for infrastructure development, as key sustainability challenges facing the County.

Celebrating success:

Parkland County believes that celebrating the success of our actions is as important as identifying the challenges that lie ahead of us. However, the County does not currently have a way to recognize and celebrate successes linked with efforts to promote sustainability.

As a result, Parkland County is committed to finding an effective and appropriate way to recognize the positive actions that residents, community organizations and businesses undertake to increase the County's sustainability.

Action Plan Goals & Strategies

Priority area: Resident participation and local sustainability initiatives.

Goal 19: Parkland County supports local community initiatives, increases the level of resident participation on matters relating to sustainability, and becomes the primary place for information on sustainability.

Strategies:

19.1 Establish the Environmental Advisory Committee: one area of responsibility will be to oversee the implementation of this ICSP.

19.2 Establish a community sustainability project grant program to support community-led sustainability initiatives.

19.3 Parkland County is the primary place for residents and businesses to go for information on sustainability – sustainability section on the County's website.

Priority area: Celebrate Success

Goal 20: Parkland County officially recognizes community-led efforts to promote sustainability

Strategies:

20.1 Parkland County celebrates community-led sustainability successes by establishing Parkland County's Sustainability Awards program.

Priority area: Sustainable Community Organizations

Goal 21: Parkland County supports its local community organizations to enhance the quality of life enjoyed by residents.

Strategies:

21.1 Preserve our heritage: establish a program for the digitization of archive material held by local community organizations.

21.2 Actively encourage partnerships between community organizations

21.3 Explore ways to increase the level of participation of youth and young adults in community events and organizations.

21.4 Capacity building for volunteers: specialized training sessions

21.5 Encourage project-based volunteering over long-term positions with new volunteers: lessens the initial burden and provides a more positive first experience which will increase the likelihood that a person will volunteer again.

21.6 Establish a volunteer incentive program

21.7 Actively encourage sponsorships between community organizations and the private sector.

21.8 Explore the need for, and the various ways to perform a county-wide infrastructure audit for community hall infrastructure.

21.9 Increase resource efficiency by actively encouraging partnerships between community organizations

Priority area: Social and Cultural events held in Parkland County

Goal 22: Parkland County increases the quality and quantity of social and cultural events hosted in the County.

Strategies:

22.1 Establish a program and events fund for community-led social and cultural events

22.2 Provide "Fun Bags" to organizers of social and cultural events – contains equipment for group activities and group sports

22.3 Educate organizers on how to successfully organize and market social and cultural events and how to reduce the event's environmental footprint.

22.4 Create a "what's happening" section on the County website to advertize community social and cultural events

22.5 Create a "top ten things to do in Parkland County" section on the website to advertize tourism opportunities to residents and non-residents.

Appendix 1 - ICSP Review Process:

The General Review Process:

1. How do we proceed? (Structuring the Process)
   Equivalent to TNS "A"

2. Where are we currently? (Baseline Analysis)
   Equivalent to TNS "B"

3. Where we want to be in 25 years? (Vision)
   Equivalent to TNS "C"

4. How do we get there? (Action Plan)
   Equivalent to TNS "D"

The Detailed ICSP Review Process:

1. Council approves the suggested ICSP review process (this document)

2. Sustainability Champions Team establishes a draft Baseline Analysis

3. Meetings are held with County department heads to complete the Baseline analysis

4. Public sessions: public input is used to complete the baseline analysis and to come up with initiatives that Parkland County can implement

5. Public Input is synthesized into a coherent Baseline

6. Public input is incorporated into the draft Action plan: multiple options are suggested for each sustainability challenge

7. Council reviews the baseline analysis and the draft action plan and selects the initiatives they would like to see implemented in the County

8. Council endorses the suggestion to adapt the MDP vision for the ICSP

9. Final document is presented to Council for adoption

Baseline Analysis:

What sustainability assets do we currently possess? What sustainability challenges do we currently face?

- In terms of the environment?
- In terms to the economy?
- In terms of culture and society?
- In terms of governance?

Which challenges are the most significant? What is our current performance in those areas?

Vision: What do we want Parkland County to look like in 25 years?

- In terms of the environment?
- In terms to the economy
- In terms of culture and society
- In terms of governance

Overarching vision of Parkland County in 25 years

How do we get there? What specific initiatives do we need to undertake in order to reach our vision?

1. Ideas for action – 2 strategies:
   i. Dematerialization
   ii. Substitution

   What can we do…
   - In terms of the environment?
   - In terms to the economy?
   - In terms of culture and society?
   - In terms of governance?

2. Define implementation timeline:
   a. Short term
   b. Medium term
   c. Long term

3. Implementation table: See below

Strategy	Responsibility	Timeline	Budget Implications	Results Achieved / Outcomes	Measure of Success

Appendix 2 - Public Participation

Public Consultation Design:

The original intent of the participation process was to engage the public in an ongoing and meaningful dialogue with respect to every step of the entire ICSP review process from the identification of sustainability challenges, to the establishment of the long term vision for the County, and the selection of initiatives that Parkland County could implement to address the sustainability challenges that residents, businesses and the County face. This would have involved numerous public input and feedback sessions for each step of the ICSP review and as other municipalities have learned, this is an extremely time consuming process.

As a result of the highly compressed timeframe that was assigned for completing the project, Parkland County had to modify this objective. The key was to ensure that meaningful public input would still be incorporated in to the final product while also reducing the time needed to compile and analyze data. In essence this approach placed priority on the quality of the feedback received rather than on the quantity received during the ICSP document review. Once complete, Parkland County would seek ongoing public engagement in the implementation phase of the ICSP through the establishment of Parkland County's Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC).

This philosophy is reflected in the way that the public sessions and the surveys were conceived. For example, with regards to the surveys, as opposed to seeking a high response rate through the use of closed-ended questions, the survey was designed to encourage thoughtful introspection from the respondents by asking them to perform a sustainability self-assessment and identify solutions that they or the County could implement to address any sustainability challenges they identified.

The result of the public consultation exercise is a highly insightful qualitative assessment of the value people place on Parkland County's environment, its economy, its governance, and its social and cultural life.

Interactive Display:

An interactive display was setup in the lobby of the County Centre from June 7th to June 14th, 2011. It had two major components: information and feedback. The information component informed people on the reasons that Parkland County has developed and is updating its ICSP, provided the definition of sustainability that Parkland County used for the ICSP, and explained the review process that Parkland County designed to complete the review within the compressed timeline. The feedback component asked people to provide their thoughts on the three questions listed above: what they value, the sustainability challenges that they face, and to list potential solutions to the sustainability challenges they identified.

Public Sessions:

Two Public input sessions were held in June 2011. The first session took place on June 15th at the Carvel Community hall and the second session was held on June 16th in Entwistle. These two locations, along with the location of the interactive display, were chosen in order to provide as many people as possible with an easily accessible venue for providing input. To ensure participation from a cross-section of County residents, it was important to select venues in three locations: Entwistle (west), Carvel (central) and County Centre (east).

Advertizing for the open houses was conducted in the following ways:

- Notice was placed on the County website
- Notice was placed on the digital message board at County centre
- Message added to the rotating on-hold phone messages that people hear when calling the County
- Article was placed in the Parkland Communicator newsletter
- Ads were placed in the Stony Plain Reporter and Spruce Grove Examiner
- Notification was sent using Parkland County's Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Carvel: June 15th, 2011

A total of 28 members of the community attended the Carvel public session which was held between 6:30 and 10:00 p.m. and featured keynote speaker Dr. Michael Sullivan, whose presentation focused on watershed management.

Those present voiced a strong interest in the ICSP, with questions ranging from why Parkland County is undertaking a sustainability planning process to questions about the possibility of implementing specific initiatives.

Entwistle: June 16th, 2011

Approximately 15 members of the community attended the Entwistle public session held between 5:30 and 8:00 p.m., which was held in conjunction with the Entwistle area structure plan open house.

Comments received from the public at this session indicated a varied level of enthusiasm regarding sustainability. While some members of the public were very enthusiastic about Parkland County's effort to increase the County's sustainability performance, others viewed the entire exercise with a certain degree of scepticism. However, people did agree that something needs to be done to address unsustainable practices, even if they disagreed on the specific methods to address the issue.

Feedback:

Natural environment: Members of the public at both sessions placed a high value on Parkland County's natural environment, with many stating that it enhances their quality of life because of the recreational opportunities, the tourism opportunities and the aesthetic beauty that a healthy, natural environment provide.

Members at both sessions also agreed that Parkland County, as a municipal government, has a strong role to play in the protection and enhancement of our natural environment, even if their opinions differed as to how the County should execute that role.

Many people present at both sessions also supported the idea of establishing usage restrictions in certain environmentally-sensitive areas, while others voiced support for finding ways to protect our waterways from contamination and degradation.

Lastly, it was felt that Parkland County should explore as many opportunities as possible to establish partnerships with conservation organizations to inventory, monitor, protect, and restore the County's natural environment.

Economic development: The vast majority of members of the public present at both sessions indicated that they would like to see future development in Parkland County to be as compact as possible, and this is not surprising given the value they place on our natural environment.

Smart growth principles were specifically mentioned as a tool that could be employed to reach this objective. Renewable energy sources was also a subject of high interest, with many indicating that they would like to receive some form of incentive to reduce the costs associated with the purchase and installation of renewable energy technologies in their homes and businesses.

When asked if they would support an increase in property taxes to help cover the costs of an incentive program, support was much more limited and the feeling that higher levels of government should offer the incentives instead was expressed.

There was a strong sentiment from a representative of the development community that environmental protection should not impede or take precedence over economic development, but rather, that environmental goals be balanced with economic and social objectives so that all three aspects may be enhanced in a way that does not privilege one over the others. In other words, the member believed that all municipal planning should be based on the triple bottom line – balancing economic growth with environmental protection and the social and cultural needs of people.

Social and cultural life: With regards to Parkland County's social and cultural life, members felt strongly that Parkland County should defend and protect its agricultural lifestyle and heritage, and that growth should be managed so that future developments do not dilute the County's proud and historical rural character.

Members also indicated that Parkland County should sustain and enhance the support it provides to local community organizations, and to increase the number of social events held in the County such as festivals, concerts, plays, etc.

Governance: On the topic of governance, members at both sessions felt that Parkland County should seek as many opportunities as possible to enhance cooperation with neighbouring municipal governments as well as with higher levels of government – provincial and federal.

Specifically with regards to sustainability, members expressed that if Parkland County is seeking to increase the sustainability performance of our residential, commercial and industrial sectors, then it ought to lead by example. They felt that without this leadership, Parkland County would be asking people to "do as we say, not as we do," which would undermine the County's credibility in the eyes of residents and non-residents alike.

Also, there were consistent calls for enhanced communication between the County and those who live, work, and play within its jurisdiction. However, when asked which delivery mechanisms would be most effective, there were mixed opinions. While some preferred that the County use electronic forms of communication, others wanted increased communication through traditional media such as newspapers, the radio and television.

Appendix 3: Linkages between this ICSP and the Strategic Plan 2011-2013

ICSP Initiative	Strategic Plan Goal 2011-2013
Priority area = Economic Development	Strategic focus: Economic Development
Priority area = Social and Cultural life	Strategic focus: Quality of Life (social/cultural)
Priority area = Governance	Strategic focus: Governance
Priority area = environment	Strategic focus: environment
Priority area = Solid Waste	Env: 1.1 Reduce Waste and Emissions
Priority area = Transportation	
Priority area = Energy	
Priority area = Water	Env: 1.2 Protect Water
ICSP is kept current	Env: 1.4 Maintain ICSP
3.1 Green Purchasing Policy	Env: 1.5 Green Purchasing Policy
1.5; 1.8: Energy Education	Env: 2.1 Encourage Sustainable Energy
2.3; 2.4; 2.5; 2.6; 2.7; 2.8: Green Building Education	Env: 2.2 Sustainable Building Practices
4.5 Website	Env: 3.2 Environmental Awareness Campaign
1.33: Waste Education	
3.6: Intelligent Communities Project	Infras: 1.1 Increase Broadband Coverage
Anywhere it is Applicable	Gov: 1.2 Identify Funding Sources
1.25: Grey Water	Gov: 1.3 Lobby Other Levels of Government
3.5: Regional Cooperation	Gov: 1.4 Regional Cooperation
2.12: Trash Clearinghouse	Ec Dev: 1.5 Marketing Tools
2.1; 2.2: LID & Smart Principles	Ec Dev: 5.1 Appropriate Development Expansion
4.6; 4.7; 4.8; 4.9; 4.10 Support Community Organizations	QOL: 1.1 Support Community Organizations
4.11; 4.12; 4.13: Enhance Recreational Facilities	QOL: 1.2 Enhance Recreational Facilities
1.43; 1.44: OHV Park	QOL: 2.2 Advance an OHV park
1.48: Education on the effects of Agriculture on Water Quality	Agri: 1.3 Agriculture Related Education

Legend:
Env: section on the environment
QOL: Quality of Life section
Ec Dev: Section on Economic Development
Gov: section on governance
Infras: Infrastructure section
Agri: Agriculture section

Glossary:

ALUS – Alternative Land Use Service

LID - Low Impact Development: LID is a term used to describe an engineering approach to storm water runoff management. The approach is based on employing on-site natural features (i.e. storm swales) to contain the runoff entirely within the property.

OHV – Off Highway Vehicle: These are vehicles that cannot be legally driven on public highways. They include: All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), motocross-type motorcycles, side by side ATVs, modified trucks, modified jeeps among etc.

MDP – Municipal Development Plan: An MDP is a strategic document that outlines the direction of future residential and commercial development, and outlines long-term land-use planning within the County.

Dematerialization: dematerialization in the context of this ICSP is about doing more with less. In other words dematerialization is about increasing the efficiency of the resources we use.

SCT – Sustainability Champions Team: this team – whose members were all staff from Parkland County - was established in May 2011 to assist with the initial stages of the ICSP review, including establishing the baseline and the identification of stakeholders.

Linear material cycle: this term refers to the way that manufacturing is done in most parts of the world: raw resources are extracted, they are converted into products, products are used during their useful life, and old products are land filled. This is considered linear because material is always moving in one direction: from the earth, to consumers, and then to the landfill.

Closed-loop material cycle: A closed-loop material cycle refers to a new and emerging approach to manufacturing: raw resources are extracted, they are converted into products, products are used during their useful life, but the old products, instead of being landfilled, are recycled into new products. It is the constant cycling of material from old product to new product that constitutes the closed-loop nature of the cycle.

Sustainability challenges: when conducting the baseline analysis, anything which is found to violate the definition of sustainability is considered a sustainability challenge.