

**Official Community Plan: Social Sustainability**  
**Discussion Preparation Guide – Neighbourhood Study Circles Workshop**  
**Thursday, February 3, 2005 - Thomas Haney Centre – Douglas Room - 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.**

***Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.***  
**- Jane Jacobs -**

**The Official Community Plan:**

The 1996 Official Community Plan (OCP) for the District of Maple Ridge provides a “set of policies or rules to guide future decision-making.” The OCP sets out objectives and policies for economic development; land and resource use planning; transportation planning; maintaining and improving the natural and man-made environment; and providing municipal services and public facilities. The Official Community Plan thereby serves as a policy document and long-term planning and decision-making tool. It assists planners and decision-makers to make the right choices that will shape the future of the community.

**Project Overview:**

The District of Maple Ridge is currently revising and updating the Official Community Plan. In 2002, the Social Planning Advisory Committee identified a review of the social planning policies in the current OCP as a principle project. Social sustainability policies were identified as a key element for inclusion in the OCP because of the growing recognition that a truly sustainable and healthy community is grounded by three equally important factors: social, economic and environmental. Evidence suggests that when one of these three elements is emphasized over another unexpected and often unwanted consequences can occur.

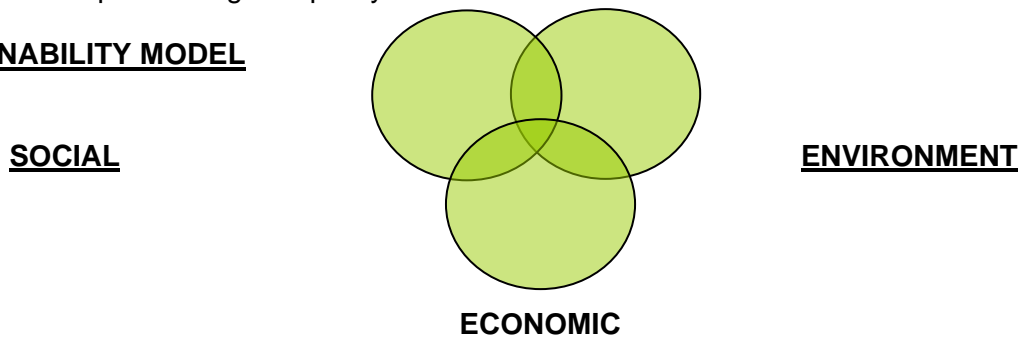
**Regional Overview**

The GVRD has developed a framework for identification of the social dimension of regional sustainability, which will form a basis for the Sustainable Region Initiative. The Framework states that a community can only function and be sustainable if the basic needs of its residents are met. A socially sustainable community must have the ability to maintain and build on its own resources. Accordingly, communities throughout the GVRD adopt policies that enhance and encourage social sustainability.

**Social Sustainability:**

Social sustainability occurs when the formal and informal processes, systems, structures, and relationships actively support the capacity of current and future generations to create healthy and liveable communities. Socially sustainable communities are equitable, diverse, connected, democratic and provide a good quality of life.

**SUSTAINABILITY MODEL**



## **The Guiding Principles**

The Social Planning Advisory Committee have been working to develop a set of Guiding Principles that are intended to provide a broad policy framework upon which social planning policies would be based. The Guiding Principles are:

- ❑ **Equity:** The community provides equitable opportunities and outcomes for all its members, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable. Equity is a fundamental concept and should be utilized as a filter by which all other principles are viewed.
- ❑ **Social Inclusion and Interconnectedness:** Residents are involved in setting and working towards collective and community goals. The community provides processes, systems, and structures that promote connectedness within and outside the community at both an informal and institutional level.
- ❑ **Quality of Life:** Individuals and communities have economic security, their basic needs are met and they have the confidence that they live in a safe, supportive and healthy environment that promotes a good quality of life. They then are able to contribute to their own well-being and to engage in community life.
- ❑ **Diversity:** The community promotes and encourages diversity by respecting, honouring and celebrating the diversity in the community.
- ❑ **Adaptability:** Communities and individuals with the opportunity and ability to respond appropriately and creatively to change result in a more resilient community.

Policy decisions will be framed by these principles bearing in mind that “Social Sustainability is a positive *condition* within communities, and a *process* within communities that can achieve that condition.”

## **Broad Objectives**

Creating policies that encourage social sustainability can be challenging, as it is a relatively new concept. Additionally, sustainability itself is intrinsically a process. It is perhaps easier to envision a community that is liveable and healthy for all citizens and to look at ways to ensure that this community is viable in the long term. Think of the things that are important to you and your family: your home, your children, your neighbourhood, your job, your retirement, nature, the air you breathe, and the food you eat. Consider that communities flourish when they build mutually supportive, dynamic balance between social well being, economic opportunity and environmental quality.

## **Six Policy Areas: Components of Healthy Sustainable Communities**

Following are the six policy areas that will be proposed for the Official Community Plan Social Sustainability segment. The list of components under each policy area relate to social sustainability research. Please review prior to the workshop:

### **Community Wellness: Community and Cultural Services**

- ❖ Meeting a wide range of recreational, cultural and community need; offering opportunities for shared experiences (i.e. festivals)
- ❖ Operating Community Centres in neighbourhoods therefore increasing accessibility; creating opportunities to meet a wide range of needs and enabling local input into neighbourhood decisions
- ❖ Having places where people can participate in and have ready access to healthy activities; where a wide range of choices to inform and educate are offered

- ❖ Providing leadership development and support by promoting individual and community growth through empowering community members to take responsibility for services: by identifying their own needs, setting priorities, and developing and acting on a common vision.

### **Citizen Engagement: Community Connections**

- ❖ Ensuring that citizens have opportunities to increase their understanding of the community and develop skills/ capacity
- ❖ Ensuring that people have a voice in decisions that affect them in their community life
- ❖ Supporting, developing and maintaining community networks of service providers and community organizations; providing opportunities to meet, to share information, and to collaborate.
- ❖ Providing opportunities for community members to connect and engage in a meaningful way

### **Diverse Population**

- ❖ Respecting, honouring and celebrating the diversity in the community.
- ❖ Recognizing gifts and assets of individuals and neighbourhoods
- ❖ Providing access for opportunities to participate in the community decision making process
- ❖ Ensuring that the most vulnerable members of the community have a voice in community decision making

### **Housing: Affordable/Special Needs**

- ❖ Ensuring that everyone has access to affordable and appropriate housing
- ❖ Developing a creative approach to providing mixed socio-economic housing
- ❖ Ensuring that meeting the demand for affordable housing is a long range community priority
- ❖ Designing housing developments that reflect the growing need to feel connected within a neighbourhood and community

### **Safety and Security**

- ❖ Encouraging people in neighbourhoods to connect, get to know each other and to care for one another; making communities about people by creating safe places to live, play and work
- ❖ Working with neighborhoods to problem-solve together
- ❖ Ensuring that everyone has access to services to meet their basic needs (social justice)

### **Healthy Community Land Use Strategies**

#### Green Community

- ❖ Focusing on environment, green space, and adventure recognizing the link to individual and community health
- ❖ Preserving and recognizing the importance of agricultural land to ensure access to locally grown affordable food

### Complete Community

- ❖ Ensuring that neighbourhoods are self-sufficient so that people can walk to schools, shopping, and have access to services in their own neighbourhoods
- ❖ Recognizing that self-sufficient neighbourhoods have a link to the health and wellness of the community
- ❖ Ensuring through development and land use, that some housing, in all neighbourhoods, is affordable with access and availability for all (a mix of non-market and market housing)
- ❖ Ensuring sustainability through the encouragement of multi use centres with a mix of commercial and residential buildings

### Diverse Community

- ❖ Ensuring that neighbourhoods are diverse and are designed to promote people supporting each other (mix of housing types and mix of people, ages, ethnic backgrounds, abilities, incomes, etc)

### Safe Community

- ❖ Creating safe and liveable communities through design so that people feel safe while walking, playing and working

### Connected Community

- ❖ Transportation is affordable and accessible providing people links and access to the services they require in a timely fashion
- ❖ Linking neighbourhoods with non-motorized traffic and pedestrian pathways
- ❖ Ensuring that neighbourhoods have spaces that act as “meeting spaces” for shared experiences

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### Some general questions to think about:

- How does your community define quality of life?
- How do you define quality of life?
- How do you describe your community?
- What makes your community liveable?
- What do you love about your community? What do you want to sustain or improve?
- Do you know any examples of sustainable communities?