

Discussion Notes from Networking Breakfast 1: March 5, 2002 (BCIT Downtown Campus, Vancouver)

Exercise # 1: Choices and Consequences

Think about other great cities in the world you have visited, and consider how Greater Vancouver might learn from choices they have made. Specifically, what have you seen accomplished elsewhere that we could adopt to make ourselves more sustainable?

Ideas	Location of Good Examples
TRANSPORTATION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive bicycle infrastructure; alternative transportation options; bicycle and pedestrian friendly; compact urban form; mixed use; livable city centres; town squares 	Amsterdam, Copenhagen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fast, efficient, attractive public transit 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rapid transit 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrated tram network as a complement to long distance bus trips = diversification of transportation options beyond standard (bicycle, car, bus), downtown core closed to vehicle traffic, very strict protection of green zone (agriculture and forests), bicycle infrastructure well developed for commuting 	Bonn, Switzerland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bike friendly centres 	Scandinavia
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Density to support transit 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic controls for traffic signals 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streetcars and LRT powered by wind/tidal power 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High transit ridership 	Boulder, CO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downtown light rail/reduced parking 	Portland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Metro transportation system scope and style promotes and makes movement via transit comfortable 	Montreal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bicycles as second most used form of transport 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pedestrian streets – no vehicles at all 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete transit system – no need for a car 	Paris
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See the book 'The Transit Metropolis: A Global Enquiry' by Robert Cervero, which has an emphasis on success 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better public transit systems that cater to all income groups and types of people 	Paris Metro, London Underground,

Ideas	Location of Good Examples
	Montreal Metro
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian oriented bridges and rings of concentration around them 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterways as alternative public transit 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European transportation systems 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Super-convenient transportation systems 	London, Paris
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While maintaining vibrancy of the huge historic centre, has created a multi-faceted transportation system, leading to satellite centres 	Paris
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation systems that are less disruptive, small scale design 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water transportation 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit on multiple routes – linking inner city with outlying areas 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making it unpleasant to drive!!! 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Busways vs. big transit – appropriate, affordable technology vs. out-of-budget, out-of-scale 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow cities and slow food movement 	Italy
BUILDINGS & NEIGHBOURHOODS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green infrastructure (e.g., solar aseptic sewage) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar-powered hot water on residential rooftops 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backyard composters 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water conservation through modified plumbing 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful building, designed to last 	Florence, Rome, Paris
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livable, convenient 	Shanghai
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ownership of the streets – can't distinguish the public from the private 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable community design (see Timothy Beatley's Green Urbanism) 	Holland, Denmark, Sweden, Finland
LAND USE SYSTEMS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional planning 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Denser development/habitat protection 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living neighbourhoods 	Holland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban containment 	Portland
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quieter choices that fit in and building that fits the street. 	Qingdao, China
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thriving waterfront 	Sydney
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plazas and pedestrian oriented development 	Barcelona
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated urban greenways 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visible limits to growth – distance to the 'edge' is close by, surrounded by natural and agrarian landscapes 	German cities and towns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valuing the land 	European cities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attention to urban detail in newly developing areas 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charging for access to the city 	Singapore
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PV powered public fountains, near-ground pathway lighting 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imaginative land use and transit ("subway" buses and busways; involved children) 	Curitiba

Ideas	Location of Good Examples
WATER SYSTEMS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gray water use 	
COMMUNITY/ CULTURE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living neighbourhoods 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sculptures 	Montreal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome diversity 	New York
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrancy / large urban spaces (squares with plenty of cafes, fountains and congregation spaces) 	Vienna, Paris, Montreal, Quebec City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reservation of the traditional lifestyle 	Prague
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public art 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private ethic of public space – making the public everyones 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserved culture and heritage 	Paris
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism development that is respectful of the resident community and pays for cultural and natural amenities 	San Francisco
AGRICULTURE SYSTEMS	Toronto
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local production of food (this also reduces transportation energy) – community gardens, roof top gardens 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green roofs 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated urban agriculture (80,000 people involved in community gardening) 	Berlin
OTHER	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The blue box – how to expand its success to other areas (e.g., climate change, Kyoto) 	

Exercise # 2: Developing the cities^{plus} Vision

Think about extending our planning horizon to 100-years, and about GVRD's desire to create a model region for urban sustainability. From this perspective, what are the most critical constraints that must be addressed in an urban systems plan? What special opportunities do we have that could enhance our effectiveness as a model region?

System Constraints

- Potential disasters: Floods, earthquakes (need for disaster relief in highly dense compact urban region)
- Geographic (including topography)/Land base
- Limited natural resources, reduced throughput of resources
- End of resource-extraction based economy
- Using prime agricultural land for urban uses
- Inherited ethnic/racial conflicts, indigenous rights / Accommodating multi-cultural needs
- Water, energy, food supply
- Liquid waste
- Demographic bulges (aging population, baby boomers)
- Immigration
- No control on population
- Lack of educating (on environment, social and economic issues)
- Lack of public participation results in lack of ownership
- Public participation over a 100-year timeframe
- The state of change in human beings in the future
- Lack of civic awareness, engagement
- Lack of participation
- Attitudes towards deteriorating density
- Poor attitude towards public transit
- mindset to accept densities
- already acceleration of 'dirty-ness'
- turf protection
- NIMBY syndrome
- Growth in consumption
- Increasing standard of living
- Institutional structure that favours large, distributed systems
- Infrastructure that will be in place for 100 years (e.g., BC Hydro)
- Big box mentality & the WTO treaty
- Governance structure (competing municipalities, decision making (e.g., lack of flexibility), voters are not educated on structure, 4-5 year terms.)
- Overcoming institutional barriers in order to move from planning to action
- Government structure does not foster ownership
- Jurisdictional fragmentation
- Permanent nature of infrastructure (difficult to change)
- Cost of living, land values
- Housing affordability
- Transport of older individuals

- Global bottom line
- Inner city issues
- Cost of living
- High cost of housing
- Quick, techno fix, 'silver bullet' mentality – this will possibly become even more exaggerated (e.g., can get a new organ so free to pollute)
- Adaptability to new technologies – we don't know what's coming
- The sustainability as an island ethic – we are not a distinct island, efficiencies can be gained by leveraging the strategies of different places
- Concentration of power increasing
- Market mechanism is the sole constraint for housing values (it costs too much to take the time to build right because of the system is now based on money borrowing /interest)
- Media is a huge influence, yet it is nationally, internationally, globally controlled
- Existing capital stock of housing and density – impacts transit affordability
- Funding for transit
- Low density developed areas
- 2/3 preserved, 1/3 not be destroyed

System Opportunities

- Tolerance/ ethnic diversity
- Plentiful hydro power
- Diversity of energy opportunities
- Relatively unspoiled natural environment
- Natural beauty
- Mild climate - low energy needs and resilience despite climate change impacts
- Connections and goodwill with other countries and cities
- Political and legal stability (Law, order, and governance)
- Truer democracy
- Environmentally oriented politicians
- Human resiliency (governance to encourage human resiliency)
- Engaging and educating public
- Latent critical mass for sustainability (e.g., Burnaby Mountain, SEFC, East Clayton, UBC, GVRD)
- We are now thinking about sustainability in an integrated way – it is time to move from thought to action
- There are working models of sustainability already in existence
- Change financial signals and/or use more financial based instruments
- Use market mechanisms (e.g., public choices to influence the market)
- Passion for sustainability
- High level of interest/resources related to environment/sustainability
- Changing technology
- Change financial signals
- Better design and architecture
- Support and infrastructure for local media increased by working together

- Infill
- Agriculture land reserve
- Olympics and large investment in transit
- Good existing infrastructure to start with
- Capacity to densify
- On other planets in 100 years?!
- It all essentially boils down to governance – it's currently illegal to be green
- Internet and telecommunications
- Agricultural production systems that do not consume land base (e.g., hydroponics, greenhouses)
- Global connections (i.e., world trade)
- SRI as a key opportunity to take action

General comments:

- Populate the planet – space is unlimited therefore sustainability isn't a problem!
- Need to build in consideration and flexibility to new things
- Do not overdefine the endpoint – the best plan is an open, flexible plan
- Local precedents
- Focus on strategic planning – not typical planning used in 5-10 year planning models
- The focus should be on the state of the human being – everything else will be irrelevant