



Frequently Asked Questions For Media

1. What is *cities^{plus}*?

Cities^{plus} is an eighteen-month planning initiative beginning in January 2002 that engages Canada and Greater Vancouver in envisioning a sustainable future by 2100. ***Cities Planning for Long-term Urban Sustainability*** is part of an international competition where Greater Vancouver will showcase Team Canada's sustainable design expertise on the world stage. Team Canada's submission will show how a large metropolitan area can make the transition to sustainability over the next 100 years. **Cities^{plus}** is the title Team Canada will operate under.

Canada's submission is being developed by the Greater Vancouver Regional District, The Sheltair Group, the Canadian Gas Association as represented by Westcoast Energy and SaskEnergy, the Liu Centre for the study of Global Issues and other partners. Experts from a range of fields, including urban planning, energy, environmental studies, economics and social planning will work together to create a template for transforming existing metropolitan areas into sustainable cities over the century.

2. What is the *International Sustainable Urban Systems Design Competition*?

Greater Vancouver is one of only nine metropolitan areas from eight countries selected to participate in the International Sustainable Urban Systems Design Competition. The other participants include China, India, Germany, Russia, Argentina, Japan, and the U.S. Greater Vancouver was selected to represent Canada out of a field of over 20 submissions from other metropolitan areas in Canada. Each of the participants must show how their metropolitan areas can achieve sustainability by 2100. It must submit the plan at the 2003 World Gas Conference in Japan. The competition is sponsored by the International Gas Union, a global organization representing more than 62 countries active in the natural gas industry. The entries will be judged by an international panel of highly regarded experts from the various fields of urban sustainability.

3. Why are *cities* key to achieving global sustainability?

In order to achieve global sustainability, the place to start is in our cities. Like all ecosystems, cities are systems, with inputs of energy and materials, and outputs of waste and pollution. However, it is the magnitude of these energy and material flows that set cities apart from the functioning of natural ecosystems. Not only have our cities accommodated more and more people as the population has grown, there has also been a shift to an urban society, with over 80% of Canadians living in cities in 2000, compared to only 10% in 1900.

We must begin to look at ways to substantially reduce energy and material consumption in cities through increasing efficiency, new technologies, recycling and reuse of waste and materials, and reintroducing natural processes into urban systems. At the same time, our cities and regions can be made more livable as air quality improves, congestion eases, and greenspaces are protected for future generations to enjoy. Only through achieving sustainability in our cities can we hope to approach achieving global sustainability.

4. Why is cities^{plus} a destination for Greater Vancouver?

A 100-year planning horizon provides an opportunity to not only move towards sustainability, but to actually achieve it at a regional scale. It means that we must envision a future where the region has fully completed the transition to renewable energy and sustainable resource use. It also entails that a lasting balance must be reached between social, economic, and ecological objectives. In this sense, sustainability is not just a direction for the GVRD and Canada, but also a destination.

5. What makes cities^{plus} different from other planning initiatives in Canada?

One of the unique features of the **cities^{plus}** initiative is that it involves a 100-year time horizon. Planning time frames typically look ahead 20 years, which is too short a period from a sustainability perspective. By using a 100-year planning horizon, it is possible to consider the broader implications of selecting and designing infrastructure systems like roads, buildings and urban utilities. A 100-year planning horizon also introduces significant uncertainty, which forces us to consider adaptable designs and management systems that can accommodate substantial change. We will need to address how to improve quality of life and prosperity, while reducing our resource use to a fraction of what we consume today; and how to achieve social equity and work opportunities, while looping and cascading energy, water and materials through many end uses until nothing is wasted.

6. What does the cities^{plus} project hope to accomplish?

The **cities^{plus}** project will focus on practical techniques for obtaining public and political input into long-term urban planning. One of the key outputs of the project will be the creation of a template for transforming existing metropolitan areas into sustainable cities over the century. The strategy will outline how to reduce environmental impacts through new and enhanced forms of transportation, changes in land use and urban density, revision of water and waste management systems and alteration of energy consumption patterns.

Cities^{plus} is intended to leave lasting legacies for Greater Vancouver and Canada. Recommendations from the **cities^{plus}** project will be considered by the GVRD in their Sustainable Region Initiative and update of the Livable Region Strategic Plan. A case study of the process, outcomes and lessons learned will be generated to benefit other metropolitan areas grappling with how to achieve sustainability. The legacy of **cities^{plus}** will be an ongoing network of business, government, community groups and involved citizens who will foster sustainability in the GVRD and Canada.