

SYNERGIES

An e-Bulletin of the City of Toronto Sustainability Roundtable

Issue 1

April 2003

Message from the Education and Awareness Group

Welcome to the first edition of Synergies! We hope that this e-bulletin proves a useful means of information-sharing and a forum for keeping members and interested individuals up-to-date with the activities and news of the Toronto Sustainability Roundtable.

Moving Towards Sustainability in Toronto: The Draft Sustainability Charter

One of the first tasks the City of Toronto Sustainability Roundtable (SRT) undertook was to craft a definition of sustainability that would help the Roundtable to achieve its goals. This was quite a difficult task, requiring members to sort through existing definitions as well as reach agreement on a new definition that would serve the mandate and goals of the Roundtable and the municipality. In the end the Measurement's Workgroup locked themselves into a room for two meetings and emerged with a draft definition which valued the various perspectives of Roundtable members and current international thinking, as well as the needs of the City.

After sending the draft to all of the other Roundtable workgroups, and incorporating their suggestions, the definition was brought forward to the Roundtable as a whole. An introductory section outlining the City's sustainability work to date and a section outlining how the City might pursue sustainability as part of its strategic planning were included.

At its last meeting in 2001, the Roundtable resolved to use what had become known as the "Sustainability Charter" for a period of one year. It would form the basis of the SRT's work, and help set future direction. At the end of one year, the SRT members would endorse the Charter and send it on to City Council for formal approval.

The SRT defines sustainability as: integrating and balancing the competing expectations of the present generation and not compromising the future. Sustainability acknowledges and considers the impact of our decisions and actions beyond the City of Toronto, recognizing that continuous commitment is essential. Sustainability achieves vitality and well-being for all through responsible planning and management of interdependent social, environmental and economic capacities.

Broadly, the Charter outlines that the City will pursue sustainability through:

A Shared Vision And Culture of Sustainability

- Building consensus and a shared vision through open and meaningful public engagement and a transparent, accountable government.
- Raising the awareness and public profile of sustainability.
- Fostering a sense of belonging and community.

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Quote of the Day

"Urban sustainability is not a clearly defined, concrete objective to be reached by a certain deadline. It is an idea, a vision, to be used as a guide for sustained, multifaceted efforts over an indefinite period. It demands a long-term, comprehensive, and integrated perspective. For many people, including some politicians and public officials, these are new and difficult ideas and they constitute an approach to urban management that does not fit well with traditional political and administrative systems. An issue of long-term, fundamental importance can easily be obscured by the apparently urgent immediate problem."

Source: Environment Canada, The State of Canada's Environment, Part III, Chapter 12, 1996

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Synergies is an e-bulletin of the Sustainability Roundtable (SRT) keeping members and observers up-to-date on SRT activities.

The SRT serves as a high-level think-tank providing advice to Toronto City Council on how the City of Toronto can implement its sustainability objectives outlined in Council's Strategic Plan.

 **TORONTO**

Sustainability in T.O.

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Implementation

- Developing and maintaining systems which are just, equitable, open and effective.
- Creating a municipal culture, which incorporates integrated decision making - including full life cycle costs - and innovative practices to achieve social, economic and environmental objectives.
- Taking responsibility to pursue sustainability through an appropriate mix of all mechanisms where the City has influence: services, programs, by-laws, education and advocacy.

Monitoring and Reporting

- Establishing mechanisms to share interrelated information on environmental, economic and social issues.
- Monitoring, reporting and communicating on key measures and the City's capacity to meet its sustainability objectives.
- Effective communication of results, processes and decisions with all sectors, elected officials and the public.

The Charter serves as a reference for Roundtable members and workgroups, while encouraging a broader understanding of sustainability within City Hall and in the community.

Workgroup Updates

Education and Awareness Workgroup

- Producing first issue of the SRT's e-bulletin "Synergies".
- Overseeing website on Sustainability in Toronto

Financial Mechanisms Workgroup

- Working with City staff to review and expand last year's *Community Budget Workbook*.
- Exploring the issue of innovative funding options to support sustainability efforts at the City.

Governance Workgroup

- Developing and piloting a sustainability assessment tool for decision-making for Council.

Measurements Workgroup

- Developing and piloting sustainability indicators.
- Producing the first version of the City's State of Sustainability Report.

Waterfront Workgroup

- Using the waterfront as a case study for exploring how decision-making on waterfront related issues could integrate the City's sustainability goals.

"The Draft Sustainability Charter will be circulated to Sustainability Roundtable members and City of Toronto departments for final review and comment."

Sustainability Resources

What's Stopping Sustainability?

Jennie Lynn Moore, School of Community and Regional Planning, University of British Columbia, 1994

This case study examines the political and institutional barriers to implementing sustainability at the City of Vancouver. The goal of the study was to identify what inhibits local government from acting on policies which support sustainable development. If you are interested in obtaining a copy, please contact Sandra Rodriguez at srodrigu@toronto.ca.

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Tool Kit

Rosalyn McKeown, University of Tennessee, 2000, <http://www.esdtoolkit.org/>

The ESD Toolkit is an easy-to-use manual for beginning the process of combining education and sustainability. The Toolkit is intended to help schools and communities develop a process for creating locally relevant and culturally appropriate sustainability education.

Sustainable Communities Network (SCN)

<http://www.sustainable.org/index.html>

The Sustainable Communities Network connects citizens with the resources they need to implement innovative processes and programs to restore the economic, environmental, and social health and vitality of their communities. The Network is a source of studies, resources, related Web sites, events and suggested readings.

Sustainability Initiatives: Success Stories and Best Practices

Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (OHCC)

<http://www.opc.on.ca/ohcc/>

The OHCC seeks to achieve social, environmental, and economic health and well being for individuals, communities and local governments in Ontario by bringing together a broad-based group of communities and provincial organizations, spanning the social, environmental, economic, and political spectrums. Coalition members share a common goal of creating healthier communities, and they actively support the Healthy Communities movement by building networks and establishing new methods for planning and decision-making.

Sustainable City - San Francisco

<http://www.sustainable-city.org/>

Sustainable City is a non-profit organization dedicated to achieving a sustainable future for San Francisco. They have developed a Sustainability Plan for the City. The Plan was developed in cooperation with community partners including community activists, city government agencies, businesses and academia.

Sustainable Dublin

<http://www.sustainabledublin.com/>

Sustainable Dublin is a community-wide, collaborative, learning-oriented, strategic initiative designed to enable Dublin's concerned stakeholders to define and implement an environmentally and socially responsible shared vision of the city's future. This initiative is working with Dublin City Council on the City's draft sustainability strategy, entitled "City of Possibilities: Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development 2002 - 2012".

Central Texas Sustainability Indicators Project

<http://www.centex-indicators.org/index.html>

The Sustainability Indicators Project is intended to increase regional awareness and commitment to sustainable community development. The goal of the Project is to develop a limited number of indicators that reflect the values of the regional community. This goal will be accomplished through ongoing public discussion that (1) defines Central Texas residents' vision of sustainability and (2) creates quality of life indicators.