
imagineCALGARY's Action Summit on the Natural Environment: Summary Report

April 8, 2014

Co-authored by Conscious Brands and the
imagineCALGARY Secretariat



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Synopsis

On April 8th 2014 an imagineCALGARY Action Summit on the Natural Environment was held. The purpose of this event was to identify key priorities for action related to the natural environment in Calgary. Approximately fifty people were engaged, and the event was facilitated by local sustainability experts *Conscious Brands*.

Report Purpose:

To outline the key priorities identified at the Action Summit.

Report Principles

- Community is at the core of imagineCALGARY
- Priorities represent the voice of the imagineCALGARY community
- Priorities propel next steps/action on natural environment with respect to the imagineCALGARY plan

Report Participants

| | |
|--|---|
| imagineCALGARY Stewardship Group | The steering committee for the imagineCALGARY partnership |
| imagineCALGARY Secretariat (City of Calgary's Office of Sustainability) | The administrative body for imagineCALGARY |
| imagineCALGARY Partners and community | Members of the 120 different partnering organizations or individual partners. The iC "community" would include partner and non-partner citizens interested in sustainability in Calgary who continue to support the imagineCALGARY Partnership. |
| Conscious Brands | Workshop facilitators and report co-authors |

Report Summary

The information contained in this report will be sent directly to City Council, and also made available to the public as a platform to make informed action towards sustainability in Calgary as it relates, primarily, the Natural Environment system.

Snapshot of Main Themes, Key Interests, and Sub-Interests

| Main Theme | Key Interests and Sub-interests | Stakeholder Role and Alignment |
|--|---|---|
| Reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions in Calgary | 1. Implementation of the Calgary Community Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve tracking of, and show progress in, the reduction of Calgary greenhouse gas emissions. | <p><i>The City of Calgary:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports priority for Environmental & Safety Management’s work in implementing the Community GHG Reduction Plan. Implementation of the Transportation Department Energy Management Plan will result in associated GHG reductions. <p><i>The City of Calgary and Community partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community GHG Plan tools: public education, incentives and proposed regulation changes. Programs involve individual homeowners, community groups and associations, eNGOs, multi-unit residential property owners, small and medium-sized businesses, corporate Calgary, as well as institutions (education and medical). |
| | 2. Reduce reliance on car-oriented transportation in Calgary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce reliance on car-oriented transportation in Calgary by continuing to encourage alternative modes of transportation in Calgary | <p><i>The City of Calgary:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligns with goals and objectives in the Municipal Development Plan (MDP), Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP), 2020 Sustainability Direction, RouteAhead, Cycling Strategy, and the Calgary Community GHG Reduction Strategy. Aligns in particular with MDP/CTP objectives: “Develop an integrated, multi-modal transportation system that supports land use, provides increased mobility choices for citizens, promotes vibrant, connected communities”; “Provide a safe, accessible, customer-focused public transit service that is capable of becoming the preferred mobility choice of Calgarians”; and “Provide affordable mobility and universal access to all Calgarians by making public transit, walking and cycling the preferred mobility choices for more people”. An Employee Mobility Plan is being developed to provide mobility choices for commuting and business travel for |

City of Calgary employees working in the Centre City.

Community partners:

- ✓ Encourage/incentivize employees to use alternative modes.
- ✓ Consider adopting programs such as City of Calgary’s “Green Fleet” programs

Citizens:

- ✓ Increase use of alternative modes of transportation

3. Consider greater incentivization mechanisms to encourage sustainable practices

Examples of ideas discussed:

- Explore incentive programs for solar and wind energy (residential and commercial), as well as LED light installations
- Explore an incentive program for all new construction to incorporate the foundations for future energy efficiency retrofits (e.g. solar-ready)
- Create fee-based incentives or disincentives for high consumption users of energy and water
- Make sustainable practices the default rather than the exception in decision making
- Explore a carbon tax

The City of Calgary:

- Supports the implementation of the Calgary Community GHG Reduction Plan as well as the developing Corporate Energy Strategy for The City (Environmental & Safety Management; Information and Infrastructure Services)
- *Aligns with the MDP/CTP objective: “Reduce the demand for non-renewable energy resources and promote energy-efficient building design and practices for all building types.”*

Community Partners:

- ✓ Use sustainability practices in creative ways

Other levels of Government:

- ✓ Consider implementing a carbon tax

Integrated Planning

4. Strengthen the integration of ecological, economic, and social aspects into planning

- Continue to increase number of mixed-use, compact and diverse neighborhoods (i.e. smart growth strategies)
- Public education of neighbourhoods by showcasing good examples of smart growth
- Increase businesses and jobs within neighbourhoods
- Building and strengthening local community economies

The City of Calgary

- ✓ Aligns with progress towards goals and targets in Municipal Development Plan (MDP), Calgary Transportation Plan (CTP), and 2020 Sustainability Direction.
- ✓ *Aligns in particular with the MDP/CTP objective: “Direct future urban growth of the city in a way that fosters a more compact and efficient use of land, in combination with a healthy mix of land uses, creates complete communities, allows for greater mobility choices, and enhances vitality and character in local neighborhoods.”*

Calgary Economic Development (CED):

- ✓ Strengthening local economic strategies

aligns with Calgary's Economic Development Strategy

Community Partners:

- ✓ Co-location of residential and employment centers

5. Value ecosystems in infrastructure and planning decisions

- *Adopt ecosystem services framework in valuing land for decision-making*
- *Consider ecosystem services and ecosystem capacity in valuing different alternatives in urban development*
- *Increase biodiversity in Calgary through better-planned and managed wildlife corridors*

The City of Calgary:

- ✓ Aligns with The City of Calgary's current review process of the Triple Bottom Line Policy and movement to enhance The City of Calgary's decision making related to the value of social, environmental, and economic aspects of decision-making.
- ✓ Parks forthcoming Biodiversity Strategic plan will address this.

6. Prioritize watershed protection within long-term planning

- *Ensure a locally sustainable water supply*
- *Continue to reduce water consumption through responsible and efficient use*
- *Support storm water reuse initiatives to meet Calgary's water management goals*
- *Riparian areas and their connectivity are sustained or restored*

The City of Calgary:

- ✓ Aligns with the MDP/CTP objective: *"Conserve and protect the natural environment including the watershed by enhancing water quality and quantity"*.
- ✓ Aligns with The City's goals of reducing its impact on the watershed through the Stormwater Management Strategy, Total Loading Management Plan and 30-in-30 Water Efficiency Plan
- ✓ Currently, the Program plan for Riparian Strategy Implementation is under development
- ✓ Anticipated alignment with Parks' forthcoming Biodiversity Strategic Plan

Government of Alberta

- ✓ Anticipated alignment with Forthcoming South Saskatchewan Regional Plan

Increase citizen connection to the environment, and awareness of human impact

7. Increase awareness, education, and citizens connection to natural environment.

- *Creating increased awareness between rapid, high consumption patterns and the implications on the environment*
- *Support greater understanding of individual/citizen natural environment impacts in Calgary*
- *Educate and build awareness around City of Calgary ecological footprint tool*
- *Encourage organizations in Calgary to embed*

The City of Calgary:

- ✓ Aligns with the Calgary Community Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan and Eco-footprint measurements (ESM)
- ✓ Aligns with focus for The Office of Sustainability's work to create, lead, manage and promote sustainability initiatives within the community
- ✓ Aligns with The City of Calgary's review of the Triple Bottom Line Policy.

social, environmental, and economic understanding into their work and decision-making

Community Partners:

- ✓ Role for organizations in Calgary to strengthen the embedded nature of sustainability into organizational culture.

8. Support for imagineCALGARY and other citizen engagement initiatives as a vehicle to increase community level understanding around environmental sustainability in Calgary

- *Engage communities through Community Associations to develop neighbourhood strategies and actions to reach iC targets.*
- *Hold forums for ongoing dialogue and communication to support action towards sustainability in Calgary*
- *Support grassroots initiatives to create positive public peer pressure for sustainable practices. E.g. sustainable behavior becomes the norm for individuals and organizations, Support grassroots initiatives that focus on greenhouse gas reduction at the individual and neighbourhood level.*
- *Utilize the Report on the Natural Environment in conjunction with this report as a platform for action around the Natural Environment going forward.*

The City of Calgary:

- ✓ Aligns with focus for The Office of Sustainability's work to create, lead, manage and promote sustainability initiatives within the community.
- ✓ Aligns with ESM and imagineCALGARY's partnership pilot program for engaging community associations in community-based action on reducing GHGs.

ImagineCALGARY Partnership:

- ✓ Aligns with the strategic direction for imagineCALGARY

Community Partners:

- ✓ Organizations are encouraged to use the information to inform action around the natural environment

Context

imagineCALGARY (iC) is a community partnership whose purpose is to provide a platform to bring partners together to support and catalyze action towards sustainability. Direction is informed by the goals and targets in the imagineCALGARY Long-Range Urban Sustainability Plan. The plan was released in 2006 by The City of Calgary and is based on massive community engagement over an 18 month process. The Partnership is governed by a Stewardship Group – made up of 15 partners representing all facets of urban sustainability as reflected in the plan. The City of Calgary is one of over 120 partners and The City’s Office of Sustainability acts as the Secretariat for the Partnership.

Over the last year, the iC Partnership has been developing a process to track progress towards the long term goals and targets in plan. A Measurement Design team – made up of experts in sustainability measurement - has been advising the iC Secretariat and Stewardship group on the development of the measurement process. The group chose to use the natural environment system as the first report – and to use it as a prototype for developing a report for the remaining systems. The natural environment system was chosen for two reasons: a) because working with one of the smaller systems in the iC plan is more manageable than working with all systems; and b) because of a Council directive to use the iC Partnership to bring environmental advice to City Council as a replacement for the former Environmental Advisory Committee to City Council.

The prototype report titled “The Report on the Natural Environment” was released in April 2014 and contains useful indicators for tracking and monitoring progress in the Natural Environment system in spirit of the long-term iC plan targets and the intent of the plan. By itself, the report does not contain recommendations for action. An Action Summit on the Natural Environment was held on April 8th and used a participatory process as a platform for prioritizing action on the natural environment system in Calgary. The summit was used to introduce the prototype report to the community, and also to invite the community voice into the process of determining priorities. The community’s voice continues to be the centre-point for iC, given the participatory nature on which it was developed.

Summit Overview

At the Action Summit on April 8th, a diverse, multi-disciplinary group of stakeholders gathered to identify key priority related to the Natural Environment system in Calgary. The stakeholders in attendance included: iC Stewardship Group, iC Secretariat (Office of Sustainability), iC Partners and members of the broader iC community. The event was facilitated by local sustainability experts *Conscious Brands*.

The Action Summit was based on the principles of dialogue, cross-pollination, collaboration and, ultimately prioritization. Each key priority identified (labeled as “Themes” below) included sub-interest areas. Approximately 50 people participated at this event and approximately 20 contributed their thoughts through a survey mechanism after the event.

The combination of the workshop and the survey along with the analysis of the iC Secretariat, Conscious Brands and a few representative iC stakeholders affirm that the priorities of the community are indeed relevant and accurately captured in this report.

Results: Priorities for the Natural Environment

The following sections summarize the results from the Action Summit. These results represent suggestions for priority areas for action related to the natural environment system going forward on behalf of the iC community.

Three key themes areas emerged. Under each of these themes below, a set of key interests and sub-interests are identified as they were compiled from the information collected at the summit and from the surveys completed after.

The three key themes were:

- I. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Calgary
- II. Integrated planning
- III. Increase citizen connection to the environment, and awareness of human impact

Key Theme I: Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions in Calgary

Direct Links to iC Plan:

- *Natural Environment System: Air Theme*
- *Built Environment System: Housing and Transportation themes*
- *Social system: Health and Wellness theme*
- *Governance system: Equity theme*
- *Economic system: Economic Well-being theme*

One of the most prominent priority areas identified by the group was the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Calgary. Given the interconnected nature of human activity in the natural environment, the strategies that were identified generally relate to affecting human patterns that have the most negative impact on our air emissions as a community. Incentivization as a mechanism for encouraging sustainable practices was a common interest in this area. Discussions ranged from both individual as well as organizationally geared incentives. Focus in this area reflects the interest in creative mechanisms to generate awareness and encourage behavior change to increase positive environmental practices. All of these interests fall under the umbrella of the Calgary Community Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan – a strategic plan developed by The City of Calgary in partnership with community stakeholders. The plan outlines the actions and roles needed to reduce emissions on a community-wide basis.

Key Interest 1: Implementation of the Calgary Community Greenhouse Gas Plan

Sub-interests

- Improve tracking of, and show progress in, the reduction of Calgary greenhouse gas emissions.

Key Interest 2: Reduce reliance on car-oriented transportation in Calgary

Sub-interests:

- Reduce reliance on car-oriented transportation in Calgary by continuing to encourage alternative modes of transportation in Calgary.

Key Interest 3: Consider greater incentivization mechanisms to encourage sustainable practices

Sub-interests:

- Explore incentive programs for solar and wind energy (residential and commercial), as well as LED light installations.
- Explore an incentive program for all new construction to incorporate the foundations for future energy efficiency retrofits (e.g. solar-ready).
- Create fee-based disincentives for high consumption users of energy and water.
- Make sustainable practices the default rather than the exception in decision making.
- Explore a carbon tax.

Key Theme II: Integrated Planning

Direct Links to iC Plan:

- *Natural Environment System: Air, Water, Land and Soil themes*
- *Built Environment System: Energy, Housing, Transportation, Goods and Services themes*
- *Social system: Health and Wellness, Sense of Community themes*
- *Governance system: Equity theme*
- *Economic system: Economic Well-being theme*

Another key priority identified at the Action Summit was the need for a more integrated approach to planning. Working to increase the mixed-use, compact, and diverse neighbourhoods was a key interest, along with greater focus on jobs and businesses within neighbourhoods. Building greater ecological connection into urban planning was also discussed including the need for better mechanisms to build our collective capacity in making decisions based on a better understanding of the role of ecosystems in planning. Concern for the long-term protection of the watershed in Calgary was also discussed at the summit and the in the submissions that followed. Participants expressed interest in understanding how future conditions will impact our environment.

Key Interest 4: Strengthen the integration of ecological, economic, and social aspects into planning

Sub-interests:

- Continue to increase number of mixed-use, compact and diverse neighborhoods (i.e. smart growth strategies)
- Public education of neighbourhoods by showcasing good examples of smart growth
- Increase businesses and jobs within neighbourhoods
- Building and strengthening local community economies

Key Interest 5: Value ecosystems in infrastructure and planning decisions

Sub-interests:

- Adopt an ecosystem service framework in valuing land for decision-making
- Consider ecosystem services and ecosystem capacity in valuing different alternatives in urban development
- Increase biodiversity in Calgary through better-planned and managed wildlife corridors

Key Interest 6: Prioritize watershed protection within long-term planning

Sub-interests:

- Ensure a locally sustainable water supply
- Continue to reduce water consumption through responsible and efficient use
- Support storm water reuse initiatives to meet Calgary's water management goals
- Riparian areas are sustained or restored due, in part, to their connection to water quality and quantity

Key Theme III: Increase citizen awareness, education, and connection to natural environment

Direct Links to iC Plan:

- *Natural Environment System: Air, Water, Land and Soil, Plants and Animals themes*
- *Built Environment System: Energy, Goods and Services, Housing, Transportation themes*
- *Social system: Health and Wellness theme*
- *Governance system: Equity theme*
- *Economic system: Economic Well-being theme*

A large part of the discussion at the Action Summit focused on the need for greater connection to the environment by citizens. Despite having a diverse range of parks, river valleys, green space, and wildlife in the city, participants felt that as citizens we often lack a strong connection to the environment in the city. Furthermore, there was an expressed need for improvement in understanding of the human impact on the environment, both in Calgary and elsewhere. It was made clear that continuing to raise awareness on how our daily choices impact the environment is a key priority.

Key Strategy 7: Increase awareness, education, and citizens' connection to natural environment.

Sub-interests:

- Creating increased awareness between rapid, high consumption patterns and the implications on the environment
- Support greater understanding of individual/citizen natural environment impacts in Calgary
- Educate and build awareness around City of Calgary ecological footprint tool
- Encourage organizations in Calgary to embed social, environmental, and economic understanding into their work and decision-making

Key Strategy 8: Continue supporting imagineCALGARY and other citizen engagement initiatives as vehicles to increase community level understanding around environmental sustainability in Calgary

Sub-interests:

- Engage communities through Community Associations to develop neighbourhood strategies and actions to reach iC targets.
- Hold forums for ongoing dialogue and communication to support action towards sustainability in Calgary
- Support grassroots initiatives to create positive public peer pressure for sustainable practices. E.g. sustainable behavior becomes the norm for individuals and organizations, Support grassroots initiatives that focus on greenhouse gas reduction at the individual and neighbourhood level.
- Utilize the iC Report on the Natural Environment in conjunction with this report as a platform for action around the Natural Environment going forward.

Conclusion

iC continues to be a vehicle for promoting conversation and action around sustainability in Calgary. This report summarizes a participatory engagement process used to identify key priorities for the natural environment in Calgary. The key priorities – represented in the main themes, key interests, and sub-interests contained in this report – leaned on principles of participatory dialogue, cross-pollination, collaboration and, ultimately prioritization to arrive at the key interests of the group for the environment at this time. Through community engagement, iC is a living, breathing network of cross-sector engaged citizens interested in taking action toward a better Calgary and this report is an embodiment of that.

Most of the key interests identified during the process and described in this report are reflected in the goals and targets across all systems in the iC plan. In this way, the iC plan continues to serve as a relevant integrated guide towards a better Calgary. More importantly, many of the priorities also reflect areas of significant achievement in Calgary since the development of the iC plan. Many of the identified strategies, for example, represent actions that The City of Calgary and other partners continue to make headway on such as watershed planning and promoting mixed-use development.

The information contained in this report will be sent directly to City Council, and also made available to the public as a platform to make informed action towards sustainability in Calgary related to, primarily, the natural environment system. All citizens, organizations, sectors, and government agencies have a contribution to make towards making Calgary a better and more sustainable city – for today and tomorrow.

About the Authors

The writing of this report was a collaborative process between local sustainability experts, *Conscious Brands*, and The City of Calgary's Office of Sustainability.

Conscious Brands

Conscious Brands is a boutique sustainability firm, located in Calgary, whose core purpose is to help businesses activate sustainability. Conscious Brands was founded on the idea that in order to make true progress towards sustainability, it needs to be at the core of a company's DNA. And for them, this means when businesses thrive in harmony with the environments and the societies in which they operate. Since 2006, we've done this by guiding organizations into a cycle of strategic action and collaborative learning around sustainability, in order to help transform their cultures from the top down and the bottom up. Accepting that each organization is on its own journey towards sustainability they see themselves as Sherpas, guiding each of their clients on the path best suited to their specific circumstances. It's an approach guided by two distinct principles: the African proverb that says "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go further, go together," and T. Harv Eker's idea that "how you do anything is how you do everything."



The City of Calgary's Office of Sustainability (imagineCALGARY Secretariat)

The City of Calgary's Office of Sustainability has a mandate to embed sustainability within The City of Calgary organization as well as to accelerate community engagement around sustainability through the imagineCALGARY Partnership and other networks. The iC Partnership is governed by a Stewardship group made up of partnering organizations. The Secretariat provides support to both the Stewardship group and the partnership as a whole.

