

# **St. Paul & Area Healthy Alberta Communities**

## ***Sustainability Plan***

*01 June 2009*



# St. Paul & Area Healthy Alberta Communities Sustainability Plan

## Introduction

### Purpose

Everyone wants to live in a healthy community – a place where people can find meaningful work, good friends and neighbours, affordable homes, personal safety, recreation and leisure and social support. Residents of St. Paul and Area are fortunate in being able to lay claim to most of these advantages. Our community is a great place to live and work.

Healthy Alberta Communities has been active in St. Paul for the past three years. The idea behind the initiative is to leverage resources that already exist in St. Paul to create a community that offers and encourages healthy choices. Other Canadian and international communities have demonstrated that this approach can have a positive and long-term impact on the health of their residents. Our goal has been to develop, implement and evaluate a uniquely Albertan approach that can then be adapted by other communities across the province.

The Healthy Alberta Communities Initiative brought people of St. Paul and Area together to talk about those things that support or take away an individual's ability to be healthy. The result is this draft Sustainability Plan. The plan represents the resident's commitment to building and sustaining a health community. It provides a basis for defining the actions needed to achieve that goal.

### Creating the Plan

In September 2007, Healthy Alberta Communities held an action-oriented workshop using an approach called Analysis Grid for Environments Linked to Chronic Disease (ANGEL-CD) workshop. The workshop brought together residents from different sectors and backgrounds to discuss the environmental influences on chronic disease in the St. Paul area and to identify three priority areas where Healthy Alberta Communities could invest its resources to effect meaningful change.

Champions for Change: St. Paul 2020 is a follow-up to this workshop and an initiative created in response to the first priority identified, *Community Beautification*. The objectives associated with this theme were to make St. Paul the most beautiful, healthy and inviting community and to make our overall "quality of life" much healthier.

Our Coordinating Committee was then established, bringing Community Futures and Alberta's Iron Horse Trail as active partners. *Creating Healthy and Sustainable Communities*, a workshop offered in November 2007 by Dr. Avi Friedman, was the

launch event for Champions for Change, St. Paul 2020. The workshop consisted of three lectures dealing with the design of communities in which citizens are encouraged to adopt healthy and active lifestyles, establishing environmental, social and economic principles and developing strategies for urban renewal of the core area of our community.

In the fall of 2008, a Steering Committee was created to guide the development of a community vision and is composed of key stakeholders and champions from our community. Alberta Culture & Community Spirit has supported the Steering Committee in its work. The committee, supported by Alberta Culture and Community Spirit developed a community consultation process, which provided many opportunities for residents of St. Paul to provide input into the Champions for Change, St. Paul 2020 initiative. Over the next sixteen months, input was sought through the following consultation activities:

- Steering Committee mini survey (January 2008)
- Public Visioning Workshop (June 2008)
- Key Strategic Priority Consultations (October 2008)
- An online community survey Online (November-December 2008)
- A Telephone survey (February 2009)
- Consultations with three sectors: youth, sports and recreation and people with developmental disabilities (March 2009)

In October 2008, the Community Coordinator, Healthy Alberta Communities, engaged an Edmonton consultant, Community Services Consulting Ltd. to assist her and the Steering Committee. The consultant's tasks were to analyze the data obtained and identify common themes, potential goals and strategies, ideas for a vision statement and other information that will be of help in drafting this Sustainability Plan.

The consultant held a planning workshop with the Steering Committee November 17, 2008 and met again with the committee January 29, 2009 to present a draft template of the Sustainability Plan. In March 2009, the work of the Steering Committee was completed, and the consultant was asked to complete this plan as far as he could. A new approach will be required to implement this sustainability plan.

## Community Vision

The following community vision and guiding principles were developed from the summary material gathered during the extensive consultations. They were then presented as a draft to the Steering Committee at its meeting on January 29 and then formally adopted on May 05.

**People of different ages, backgrounds and interests are drawn to St. Paul as a place to live or visit because it is an attractive and friendly community, a significant regional hub, that offers a variety of pursuits and a wide range of services in a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.**

## Guiding Principles

- That decisions build on the existing and potential strengths of the community
- That all potential impacts of a decision be examined before going ahead, to ensure that proposed goals will be achieved
- That every attempt be made to obtain buy-in to decisions
- That decisions incorporate long-term as well as short-term activities
- That the health of the town and its residents is the driving force (physical, social, environmental and economic)
- That success indicators be tied to activities proposed and the achievement of the community vision
- That plans remain focused but flexible to changing conditions, needs

## Characteristics of a Sustainable Community

These characteristics were identified from a review of the current literature on community sustainability plans. They are offered as summary advice for those engaged in implementing the sustainability plan.

- A vibrant, diversified economy
- Proximity to services and amenities
- Opportunities to exercise personal choice
- Recognition of the need in a diverse community of building strong relationships
- Democratic governance that fosters equitable civic participation

- A physical and social environment that is safe and healthy for all
- Ecologically sound development that considers future generations

## **Areas of Focus**

Three themes were distilled from the ideas collected through the various consulting activities. These became the areas of focus.

### **Revitalizing Downtown**

#### ***Occurrence of the theme***

- “Community beautification” emerges as a theme of the ANGEL-CD workshop.
- In the session with Avi Friedman, downtown revitalization was the highest priority. The next most frequently mentioned priorities were infrastructure and family-recreation.
- The steering committee makes reference to several related sub-themes in its January 2008 visioning process.
- Downtown revitalization is shown as a sub-theme under Community Economic Development, the first theme identified in the June 2008 public consultations. Commercial/industrial development is the second theme.
- The revitalization theme and sub-themes dominate the mini survey of the steering committee.
- A revitalization theme and sub-themes are identified in the October 8 2008 Key Strategic Priorities Consultation process and the October 21 2008 public consultation.
- In the “sector” consultation with Persons with Developmental Disabilities, ways were identified to make the community more accessible, safe and attractive (e.g., curb cuts, street lighting.).

### **Promoting Healthier Lifestyles**

#### ***Occurrence of the theme***

- Representatives of community agencies saw this as a priority. The sub-themes of food, physical activities and smoking were the focus of the ANGEL-CD workshop.

- Health lifestyles received mentions in the Steering Committee mini survey.
- Health and Community Lifestyles are two themes from the visioning exercise. There are references to services, diet, housing, safety, intergenerational supports, valuing children and emotional and environmental well-being.
- Health, Recreation and Leisure are sub-themes under Community Lifestyles in the Key Strategic Priorities Consultation process and the October 2008 public consultation.
- The “sector” consultation, Sports and Recreation, resulted in many suggestions for improving recreational opportunities.

## **Caring for Children and Youth**

### ***Occurrence of the theme***

- Child and youth issues came up many times in the ANGEL-CD workshop.
- Care and Learning, a theme from the visioning exercise, focuses on children and youth.
- The mini-survey makes half a dozen references to youth and youth issues.
- In the session with Avi Friedman, youth issues was ranked as a priority.
- Youth was referred to the Steering Committee mini-survey.
- Child-care appears under Community Lifestyles in the Key Strategic Priorities Consultation process and the October 2008 public consultation.
- Suggestions from the “sector” consultation with Youth included involving youth in more activities and decisions and introducing or retaining mentorship and leadership programs for youth.

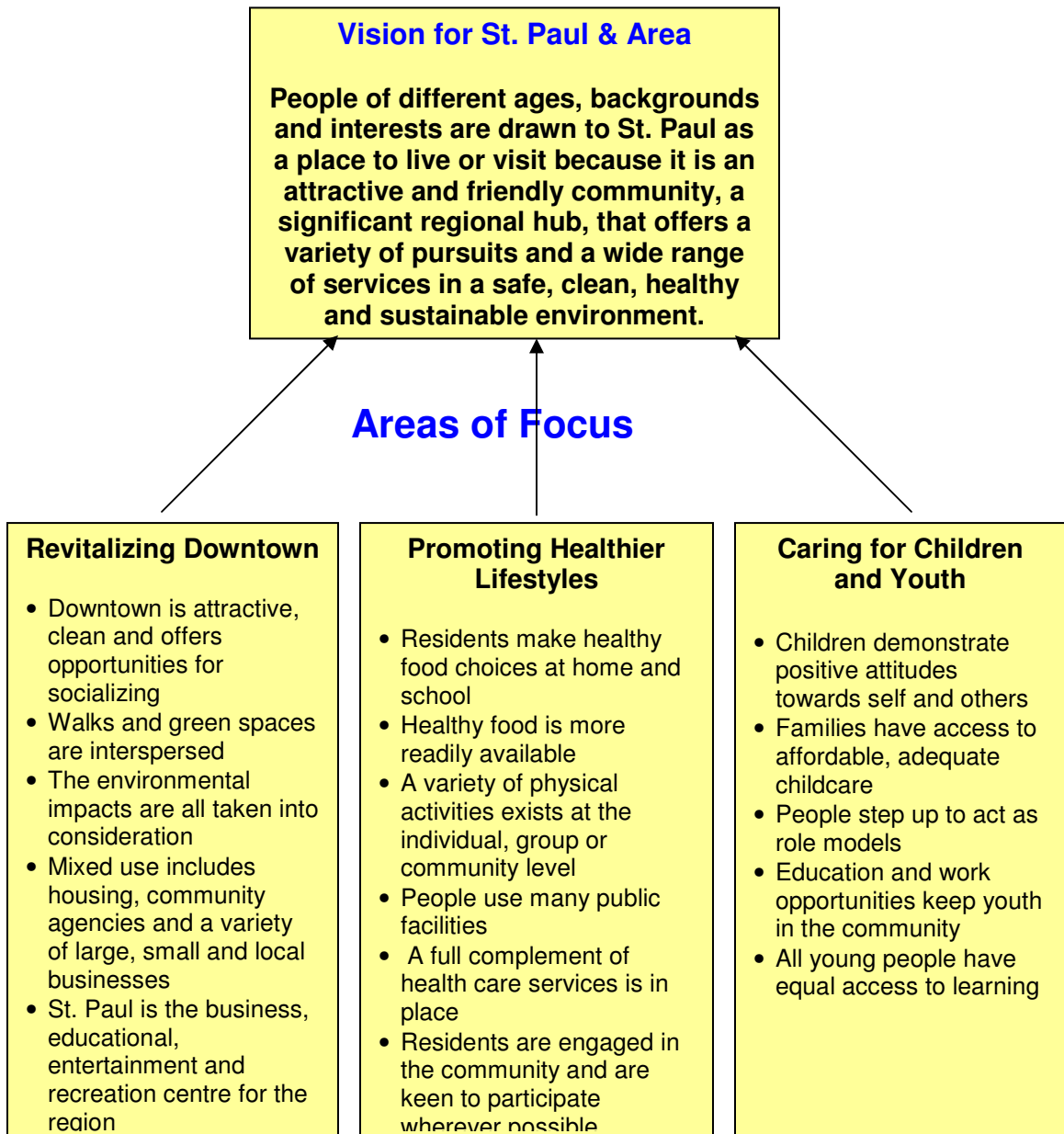
## **Other Specific Concerns**

These concerns were also noted in the consultation summaries and it is suggested that they be considered within each of the three areas of focus.

- That steps are taken to mend the racial tensions between Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal because individual and collective health is improved through positive human relationships.
- That the economic or environmental impacts of growth/development be considered.

- That any actions taken be supported by sound data collection and analysis.

## St. Paul & Area Healthy Alberta Communities



# Sustainability Assessment

## Area of Focus # 1 – Revitalizing Downtown

### Where are we now?

- Some buildings in downtown are empty or have been left to deteriorate.
- Smaller centrally located businesses are at risk from big box stores.
- The downtown lacks green space, opportunities to rest or stroll comfortably, and accessibility features (e.g., curb cuts) – the addition of which would make it more attractive and increase use.
- People do not always feel safe in the downtown.

### What are our priorities?

- Improve safety, visual appearance (deterioration, cleanliness), opportunities for socializing.
- Change parking/road configurations, create more walks and green spaces, plant trees.
- Attract a larger variety of businesses, including sustainable small local enterprises.
- Expand the mixed use of downtown (housing, community agencies).
- Create an industrial park outside the downtown.
- Make St. Paul a business-entertainment-recreational centre for the region.

### Where do we want to be?

- Downtown is attractive, clean and offers opportunities for socializing.
- Walks and green spaces are interspersed.
- The environmental impacts are all taken into consideration.
- Mixed use includes housing, community agencies and a variety of large, small and local businesses.
- St. Paul is the business, educational, entertainment and recreation centre for the region.



## **Area of Focus # 2 – Promoting Healthier Lifestyles**

### **Where are we now?**

- There is a shortage of scheduled events (sports, music, arts, culture) as well as informal or unstructured opportunities that appeal to families and people of all ages and bring the community together.
- Parks, facilities and public services are not accessible to or used by all (i.e., for reasons of cost, transportation, child care, sense of safety, etc.).
- Services are not accessible by walking or bike.
- Parents/youth may need more information on making healthy choices.

### **What are our priorities?**

- Encourage healthy choices in food at home and at school (through promotion).
- Make healthy food more available by removing barriers such as cost.
- Create and promote opportunities for structured and unstructured physical activities at the individual and community levels.
- Increase access to public facilities (recreation, community kitchen, playgrounds)
- Ensure the community has a full complement of health professionals and health care services.

### **Where do we want to be?**

- Residents make healthy food choices at home and school.
- Healthy food is more readily available.
- A variety of physical activities exists at the individual, group or community level.
- People use many public facilities.
- A full complement of health care services is in place.

## **Area of Focus # 3 – Caring for Children and Youth**

### **Where are we now?**

- Young people often have to leave the community for education or work.
- Youth need more opportunity locally to participate in healthy leisure (personal development) activities.
- Cost and availability of childcare and children's programs are barriers for some.
- Youth need positive education, messages directed towards avoidance of negative influences and activities (e.g., bullying, drugs, racism).

### **What are our priorities?**

- Focus on developing skills to build relationships and positive attitudes (anti-bullying, family violence, peer pressure, racism).
- Improve access to affordable, adequate childcare, including after-school care
- Encourage/provide role models for youth.
- Create messaging for children about avoiding drugs.
- Increase opportunities (post-secondary education, work) to keep youth in the community.
- Ensure children and youth have equal access to academic and personal development learning.
- Offer more positive events for youth and safe places for them to gather.

### **Where do we want to be?**

- Children demonstrate positive attitudes towards self and others.
- Families have access to affordable, adequate childcare.
- People step up to act as role models.
- Education and work opportunities keep youth in the community.
- All young people have equal access to learning.

# Developing and Implementing Strategies

This community plan describes the priority areas for focus based on consultation with the community and analysis by the Champions for Change Steering Committee.

## Preparing for Implementation

In the next phase of the initiative, the Steering Committee acknowledges that it will need to focus on organizing the residents and organizations in St. Paul to develop and implement strategies that lead to changes in these areas. This requires attention to the following leadership tasks:

1. Raise awareness by elevating the issue to the public agenda.
2. Engage people by convening the diverse set of people, agencies, and interests needed to address the issue(s).
3. Stimulate multiple strategies and options for action.
4. Sustain action and maintain momentum by managing the interconnections through rapid information sharing and feedback.

## Guidance and Engagement

- The present members of the Steering Committee are willing to continue their commitment into the next phase of the work, but see great benefit in building a stronger and more diverse committee membership by including community leaders from local institutions.
- The committee intends to provide broad guidance to small clusters of residents and local leaders who share a commitment to the achievement of one of the current three areas of focus.
- The committee is willing to undertake the preparation of an engagement and communication strategy, to include an early joint meeting of the Town and County Council and an official launch of Champions for Change in September.

## Building Community Capacity

The Steering Committee acknowledges that there is a need to build the overall capacity of residents and organizations of St. Paul to make progress in these – and other emerging – priority areas of focus.

These measures for capacity building may include:

- **Leadership Skills** – the skills, knowledge and attitudes of people to work together on complex local issues.
- **Learning** – an ongoing process of learning from local experience and exploring what works – and what does not work – in other communities.

- **Aides for Action** – the availability of tools and techniques that can be used to deal with the variety of concrete tasks emerging from local action (e.g. planning, evaluation, etc.).
- **Facilitation & Coaching**– the availability of skilled human and technical resources for specific tasks (e.g. planning) or substantial expertise (e.g. expert on downtown revitalization).
- **Resources** – access to financial and technical resources to address different issues as they emerge (e.g. training, studies, planning processes, etc.)

## **In Conclusion**

In submitting this sustainability plan the Steering Committee is grateful for the active participation of so many residents of St. Paul through the consultation phase of this important initiative. The insights and contributions offered have been of great encouragement and inspiration. The Steering Committee is also very confident that there are many within our community who will now accept the challenge of developing possible strategies for the selected areas of focus, to help us achieve our vision of St. Paul as a healthy, sustainable community and regional hub.