The Whitehorse Strategic Sustainability Plan

Growing a Sustainable Whitehorse
Letter from the Mayor

Dear Resident

I’d like to welcome you to the City of Whitehorse’s Strategic Sustainability Plan. As our city continues to attract new residents, businesses, and infrastructure, the need for a long-term strategy to respect our environment, values and lifestyle while accommodating new growth is clear.

In the following pages you will learn about the principles of sustainability that the City of Whitehorse values and the actions we are and will be taking as our community moves towards being a sustainable community.

Our Strategic Sustainability Plan is a strategy that was developed by our community for our community in 2007 and creates a vision that will guide us over the next 50 years. It considers our economy, our identity, as well as our environment and it will be up to us to ensure that the Whitehorse we all have chosen to call home thrives as a sustainable community into the future.

Thank you for joining us on what is proving to be an exciting journey.

Bev Buckway.
Mayor, City of Whitehorse

“Sustainability means living within the Earth’s Limits. It means living in a world where feeding people does not necessitate polluting ground water and coastal shorelines. Where transporting people and goods does not mean polluting our air and changing our climate. Where heating our homes and powering our industries does not require vast amounts of polluting fossil fuels. **Sustainability means doing things better – not doing without.**”

David Suzuki, Foreword to Sustainability Within a Generation 2004
The Process

How was the Strategic Sustainability Plan developed?

2005 – Government of Canada signs the Gas Tax Agreement, which provides funding from federal gas tax revenues to Canadian municipalities to be used in capacity building, planning and infrastructure.

2006 – The City of Whitehorse and Yukon Government agree to work together on gas tax funding and projects.

2007 – The City of Whitehorse develops its Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP), which lays out its priorities for sustainable projects to be funded by gas tax. In December, the Yukon Government Review Committee approves the City’s ICSP.

2007 – As part of its ICSP, the City decides to develop a seven year Strategic Sustainability Plan as a guiding vision to ensure the municipality moves towards a sustainable future. To ensure that this was an open and engaging process that would result in a “living” document, the City engaged local residents in developing this Plan.

October 2007 – The City hosts a four day Sustainability Charrette to drive the creation of the Strategic Sustainability Plan.

December 2008 – City Council approves and adopts the Strategic Sustainability Plan.

2009 – Implementation of the Strategic Sustainability Plan begins, as initial key targets are met. Monitoring and reporting on progress of the Plan is ongoing through the Whitehorse See-it site. (online at whitehorse.ca)

Charrette Background

The City of Whitehorse held a Sustainability Charrette in October 2007 at the Mount McIntyre Recreation Centre. The purpose of a Charrette is to bring together City staff, experts in key subjects, and local residents in a comprehensive planning process to envision the future together.

The Sustainability Charrette was a key part of developing the Strategic Sustainability Plan. Over four days of workshops and visioning exercises, principles of sustainability were developed, and issues and action items were identified. These sustainability principles were used to guide the strategies and actions that became the Strategic Sustainability Plan, which can be found online at whitehorse.ca. This document is a summary of the Plan. On the following pages you will find the principles (the “roots” of the tree) of sustainability, as well as the strategies and actions that will guide the City into the future as a sustainable community.

Key Initiatives

1995 – Joined Partners for Climate Protection Program
2002 – Endorsed Kyoto Protocol with other Municipalities
2002 – Official Community Plan emphasizes sustainability
2005 – Whitehorse Moves and Transportation Showcase and Road Diet
2007 – Whistle Bend Sustainable Neighbourhood Design (award winning)
2007 – Developed Integrated Community Sustainability Plan for gas tax funding
2008 – Strategic Sustainability Plan adopted by City Council
2008 – Feasibility Study of District Heating System in Whistle Bend
2008 – Developed Comprehensive Zoning for the new neighbourhoods of Takhini North, Stan McCowan, Ingram, and Whistle Bend
2009 – Developing Climate Change Adaptation Plan with local partners
2009 – Energy efficiency amendments to Building and Plumbing Bylaw
2009 – City-wide composting and waste diversion program
The City of Whitehorse hosted a visioning session in May 2007 to identify what the vision for the City of Whitehorse is. This vision and the following values were reconfirmed during the Sustainability Charrette.

“Whitehorse will be a well planned self sustaining community that is a leader in energy conservation and innovation that maintains and conserves wilderness spaces for future generations. Whitehorse will continue to strive for a better quality of life that is reflected in its vibrant economy and social life.”

May 23, 2007, Community Value and Visioning Session, Hi Country Inn

Whitehorse Residents Value a Sense of Community
Whitehorse has a small town feel and yet offers many larger city services. People are friendly and involved in the community. There is a high level of community involvement. Residents value the uniqueness of our community and celebrate the diversity of our people.

Whitehorse Residents Value Their Quality of Life
Whitehorse is a safe community that offers a balanced lifestyle. Residents of Whitehorse value the opportunities to be challenged in their work and recreate nearby. We value the intergenerational mix of our population, access to health care and the educational opportunities available.

Whitehorse Residents Value the Natural Beauty and the Closeness to Nature
The Yukon River runs through Whitehorse and our city is surrounded by mountains. Our residents value the nearby access to the wilderness. Residents value the wildlife, green spaces and trails in our neighbourhoods and the connections to other neighbourhoods. We value clean air and clean water.

Whitehorse Residents Value Leadership
Whitehorse has world class recreational, cultural and educational facilities. We are leaders in business, science, culture and sports. We are proud of our accomplishments and support innovators and new ideas.

Whitehorse Residents Value the Contributions of First Nations
The Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Ta’an Kwach’an Council have Final and Self Government Agreements. We value the First Nations’ culture, traditions and governments. We value and respect their stewardship of the land. Whitehorse residents value the participation and contribution of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Ta’an Kwach’an Council and their people.

Whitehorse Residents Value our Vibrant Arts and Cultural Community
Whitehorse residents are proud of our heritage and the numerous community events and celebrations that we enjoy. We value and support our many artists. We celebrate their unique and diverse works and performances. We value the cultural facilities, which attract outside artists to perform and exhibit in our city.

Whitehorse Residents Value Local Businesses
Whitehorse residents value the ability to shop locally and support local businesses. Whitehorse residents are proud of Whitehorse/Yukon based businesses.

“The future is not some place that we are going, but one that we are creating. The paths to it are not found but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destination.”

– Anonymous
Principles

These are the seven principles that guide the City of Whitehorse’s Strategic Sustainability Plan. Each Sustainability Principle provides a basis from which the City of Whitehorse will make decisions for the future. Each principle is also a theme for specific strategies and actions for the City over the next seven years.

THRIVING ENVIRONMENT: Stewardship of the natural environment and recognition of its intrinsic value and importance for quality of life.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Decisions on development, land use, infrastructure, energy and transportation shall be integrated to minimize our ecological footprint.

LEADERSHIP: Long-horizon community leadership true to our principles of sustainable development and global responsibility.

DIVERSE LOCAL ECONOMY: A vibrant, diverse local economy that encourages self-sufficiency, uses resources efficiently and creates inter-generational wealth.

EQUITY: Value equity, fairness, and inclusiveness in our community relationships.

CULTURAL IDENTITY: We celebrate cultural diversity that strengthens the uniqueness of our northern community.

EDUCATION: Empower every generation to entrench sustainability in education with the benefit of shared northern knowledge.

During the Sustainability Charrette, participants rated their priorities as follows:
Thriving Environment

Stewardship of the natural environment and recognition of its intrinsic value and importance for quality of life.

- Support YTG in the development of air quality standards
- Continue anti-idling policy
- Improve emission standards for City buses
- Implement the water & sewer study
- Meet or exceed YTG standards
- Create a green space plan
- Solid waste action plan
- Implement green procurement policy
- Achieve community waste targets

“78% of the City’s land mass is dedicated to park and/or identified as protected from development.”

Planning and Development Services
City of Whitehorse 2008

“Canadians are among the highest users of water in the world, using twice as much per capita as the average European. Despite emerging threats to water security such as climate change, pollution and increasing urbanization, most Canadians do not consider water quantity an issue. Because of our relative abundance of water, conservation is seen as a well-intentioned activity, but not a necessity.”

Polis Project on Ecological Governance, UVIC 2006

“Whitehorse residents value our closeness to the wilderness. Residents value the wildlife, green spaces and trails in our neighbourhoods and the connections to other neighbourhoods. We value clean air and clean water.”

May 23, 2007 Value and Visioning Session
Decisions on development, land use, infrastructure, energy and transportation shall be integrated to minimize our ecological footprint.

This principle was divided into two themes at the Charrette as the scope of community development is large. The themes became:

- Energy
- Land Use and Transportation
Leadership

Long-horizon community leadership true to our principles of sustainable development and global responsibility.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead

Diverse Local Economy

A vibrant, diverse local economy that encourages self-sufficiency uses resources efficiently and creates inter-generational wealth.
Equity

Value equity, fairness, and inclusiveness in our community relationships.

- Ensure all City public buildings are universally accessible by 2025.
- Achieve universal design through bylaw, regulations, and partnerships.
- Ensure public transit is accessible.
- Encourage childcare facilities in residential and commercial zones.
- Increase access to healthcare facilities and promote healthy lifestyles.
- Continue to develop programs to ensure affordable access to City facilities.
- Promote diversity & quality of life in City workforce.

Cultural Identity

We celebrate cultural diversity that strengthens the uniqueness of our northern community.

- Facilitate partnerships with arts & culture community.
- Directly support local arts & culture community and artists.
- Support a vibrant downtown.
- Increase use of the trail network.
- Develop year-round active living initiatives & partnerships.
- Participate in & support active living initiatives & partnerships.
- Support year-round outdoor recreation activities.
Principle: Education

Empower every generation to entrench sustainability in education with the benefit of shared northern knowledge.

Implementation

The City of Whitehorse is committed to being a sustainable community. Many of the strategies are in place and being implemented. You can follow the progress on the City’s website at www.whitehorse.ca.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is all our responsibility as citizens of Whitehorse to ensure we are making sustainable choices. The City of Whitehorse will lead our community through implementing this plan. The City of Whitehorse can only make legislative and policy changes to those areas of municipal jurisdiction that are handed down to the City through the Yukon Government Municipal Act.

Partnerships

It is the City’s goal to continue to engage all our partners as we grow our sustainable community. Our partners include the federal, territorial and first nation governments. Our partners also include the many non-governmental organizations that play a significant role in our community as well as our business and educational communities.

Together we will make this happen.
Growing a Sustainable Whitehorse