

Highlands Sustainability Strategy

FAQ

1. What is the Highlands Sustainability Strategy?

Highlands Sustainability Strategy is our **Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP)** and **Official Community Plan** update. The ICSP is our comprehensive, community-wide, long-term sustainability vision and plan. It proactively addresses key factors that influence our community's success and sustainability to the year 2030 and beyond.

It will be developed by and implemented by the community, using a transparent process to ensure accountability. The plan will:

Provide guidance: Vision and Priorities that outline what our community would like to be in the future and **Sustainability Objectives**.

Ensure action: Strategies/Actions that provide more direction on how we will achieve the Vision, Priorities and Sustainability Objectives.

Measure progress: Monitoring system to track our progress in order to learn and improve.

Ensure continuous engagement: Process and Tools to continue to build on existing and new approaches.

The sustainability principles and vision from the ICSP will be used to update and guide the policies in our OCP. The OCP is a legal document required by the Province that guides land use and development decisions in our community.

2. What does integrated and comprehensive mean?

An integrated community sustainability plan (ICSP) is a big picture, holistic plan that provides guidance for the development or alignment of all municipal or government plans, policies and decisions (i.e., Official Community Plan, Transportation Plan, municipal development plan, energy plans, purchasing policies, capital planning, etc.)

An ICSP is one integrated decision-making framework applicable to all other community plans. It is comprehensive because it provides guidance for all aspects of community life.

An ICSP is also comprehensive in that it has the potential to provide inspiration and guidance for non-municipal organizations, citizens or business as these community partners see fit.

An ICSP also requires integration of actions between local government, community organizations and business, so that a shared vision is achieved by working together on strategies and actions.

3. Why do we need an ICSP for Highlands?

Creating a plan for a more sustainable and successful community may be one of the most important public engagement initiatives undertaken by a community. The creation of an inspirational vision and strategies for moving toward that shared vision is, in effect, creating a strategic plan for your community that addresses economic, social and environmental goals.

Highlands Sustainability Strategy

Sustainability planning helps communities gain insight into their long-term goals for success – the goals then shape and inform investment and infrastructure decisions, reducing potential costly short-term and dead-end blunders. Significant benefits accrue to communities moving in the direction of long-term success. As an energizing and motivating conversation for the community it helps to elevate potential deadlock issues, attract new residents and niche businesses, as well as retain and motivate municipal talent. Local economies are prepared for the long-term impacts of climate change, shifting global priorities for goods & services and rising energy prices. Community members commit to maintaining their resilience, networks and quality of life through demographic shifts and other social challenges. Municipalities save significant money over time through reduced energy and waste management costs.

4. Don't we already have other plans that provide guidance for us?

1. **Yes, and Highlands' ICSP will draw a little material from all of these plans to help inform each of the vision, priorities, strategies, actions and indicators.**
2. Highlands' ICSP will take some of the highest level direction from our existing plans to identify synergies, and add more or different directions where the community identifies gaps or contradictory approaches.
3. The result will be the community's highest level and most comprehensive plan.

5. Highlands ICSP will be an integrated and comprehensive sustainability plan. How is this different from an environmental or 'green' plan?

1. **Highlands ICSP will encompass comprehensive, or integrated, sustainability approaches including social, economic and environmental. An environmental plan focuses primarily on the environment.**
2. The plan is based on the assumption that short and long-term economic success is dependent on achieving social and environmental sustainability objectives.
3. This integrated planning approach sets it apart from other traditional community plans. Because issues are often complex and overlapping, they cannot be solved in isolation and are best addressed using a comprehensive, systems-based approach that addresses the root of the problem, rather than only the symptoms. For example, toxic effluent in rivers affects fish health (environmental), which affects people's health (social) and their financial prosperity (economic). All of these elements and their connections must be considered to arrive at optimal approaches.

Highlands Sustainability Strategy

6. Can we afford to think about sustainability and environmental issues? Should we not concentrate our efforts on more pressing economic challenges?

1. Sustainability planning and actions is not about choosing between economic, environmental and social issues. Rather, it is about making smart decisions today to achieve all three in the future. Sustainability includes short and long-term economic success, which is essential to achieve our social and environmental objectives.
2. We cannot afford to lose sight of environmental or social issues. Our futures are intricately tied to the ability of natural systems to function. For example, the work of the Ground Water Task Force or the Heritage Task Force.

7. How will Highlands' ICSP make a difference on the ground? How will we ensure action and real progress?

1. The Highlands' ICSP Vision and strategies set direction for progress – and the strategies lead to on-the-ground action of your ideas and ideas generated by the Sustainability Task Force.
2. Additionally, the plan will influence our OCP and other community plans and actions.
3. A monitoring program will measure and communicate progress.

8. How will Highlands Sustainability Strategy be unique and tailor-made for our community?

1. Highlands' Sustainability Strategy will be unique to our community because it will:
 - a. draw on our community's vision and what is important to us
 - b. continue the work of the 2009 Sustainability Task Force
 - c. be guided by our Sustainability Strategy Advisory Committee
 - d. have actions based on our citizen's ideas and input
 - e. guide updated policies and directions from our OCP
2. At the same time it might be similar to other communities because:
 - a. we are using a systems based approach and proven process
 - b. small communities such as ours will have similar indicators for measuring performance
 - c. despite our cultural differences, we share similarities with our neighbours and other BC communities.
 - d. we have similar economies to other communities
 - e. we are governed by similar Federal/Provincial laws and legislation

Highlands Sustainability Strategy

9. Will an ICSP provide clear answers on all community issues?

1. Highlands' ICSP is not intended to provide specific answers on every issue, as this would be inflexible and would not stand the test of time. Highlands' ICSP provides guidance and direction for decision-making.
2. Specific issues and situations will be assessed and discussed using Sustainability Strategy criteria, along with the best possible current information that is available to arrive at optimal decisions for the community.
3. Highlands' ICSP will provide guidance to ensure constant progress toward our vision – in the most feasible manner given the community's changing economic reality. There may be some short-term trade-offs. However, all steps and decisions must contribute to our ability to meet success for our community and sustainability in the long term.

10. Can an ICSP truly guide community decisions? How?

Decision-making tools and frameworks based on the ICSP vision and objectives can be used to guide Council decisions, purchasing and project decisions, etc., by the local government as well as by all community organizations and businesses. For example, strategic questions such as “Does this action move our community toward our shared description of success?” requires thinking and alignment of decisions to the community's articulated vision.

11. How can I be involved in and contribute to Highlands' Sustainability Strategy?

Individuals and organizations can be involved in a number of ways, including:

- Keeping up to speed with regular updates on www.highlands.bc.ca/sustainability/ and **Twitter**
- Attending the public events to contribute to the creation of the community's descriptions of success, and to provide input on the draft ICSP and OCP
- Providing input to the process via email
- Take on actions that help the community move towards the articulated descriptions of success

12. What are the key benefits of the Highlands' Sustainability Strategy approach?

The ICSP:

1. Will align community direction towards a **shared vision**, using shared language, and a shared approach to implementation.
2. Will be a **proactive**, comprehensive, and science-based approach to long-term planning, effectively supporting collective and informed decision-making at all scales.

Highlands Sustainability Strategy

3. Will improve **transparency and accountability** through community engagement, as well as robust monitoring and reporting, and decision making tools with clear criteria.
4. Will be an effective action-oriented tool to help the community use limited resources **strategically and efficiently**.
5. Will position the community well for ICSP-linked **funding opportunities**, and potential regulatory changes.
6. Will **align OCP policies and directions** that guide land use, housing, economic and transportation decisions in the community.