



TASP Focus Group Session #2 Session Notes

Meeting Date: October 3, 2009
Meeting Time: 9:00AM- 2:30PM
Location: Athabasca Multiplex

1. **BACKGROUND:**

The Town of Athabasca Sustainability Plan is a non-statutory document that the Town of Athabasca will use to guide decisions and revisions to the Town's other master planning and regulatory documents. The Municipal Development Plan (MDP), Land Use Bylaw (LUB), Area Re-development Plan and Heritage Plan are examples of Statutory plans that will be effected by this document.

Sustainability Plans address more than land use and development plans generally cover. As such the document will ensure that the Town Council and staff have a comprehensive Plan to help them evaluate municipal decisions relating to built and physical infrastructure (roads, sewer, water, urban forests, pesticide use, etc) economic initiatives, social services, heritage initiatives, recreation initiatives, cultural initiatives and governance matters.

There are four (4) questions that we intend to address throughout this planning process. They are:

1. What is the current situation in the Town?
2. What is the desired situation for the future?
3. How can we get there (what are achievable and realistic initiatives)?
4. How can we measure our successes and keep ourselves accountable?

At the first Focus Group session we held a workshop discussion focusing on the first two (2) questions. At the second Focus Group Session (summarized in this document) we talked about the results of the first session and held a facilitated discussion organized around the four (4) pillar areas to brainstorm objectives and strategies which will help phrase the answers to the third and fourth questions.

2. **ATTENDANCE:**

Attendance at this Focus Group Session was very low. There were 17 participants in the session including the Community Advisory Group, Council, staff and MPS consultants. Public notification for the meeting included newspaper ads, e-mail notification and phone calls. This differed from the notification programme for the first meeting in that for the first round of meetings we mail notified the community stakeholders, which required the notifications to go out a little bit earlier, and we put up posters. We had much better attendance for the first meeting. As a result, for the third Focus Group Session, we are recommending that we mail notify, put up posters and e-mail contact the community stakeholders in an attempt to generate a stronger turnout.

3. MEETING OVERVIEW:

During the first focus group session we worked with community members to identify the current situation within the Town of Athabasca and to identify the community’s sustainability goals for the future.

The purpose of the 2nd Focus Group Session was to work with the Community to “draft” the Sustainability Plan. At this 2nd Focus Group session participants were assigned two tasks to help answer these questions.

- ❖ How can we get there (what are achievable and realistic initiatives)?
- ❖ How can we measure our successes and keep ourselves accountable?

The two tasks were as follows:

1. In the morning, the group worked together to formulate Sustainability Objectives, based on the data collected from the previous consultation sessions. This information provides direction regarding “how the Town can achieve its Sustainability Goals”.
2. In the afternoon participants were asked to use the Sustainability Objectives that the group formulated in the morning to draft potential: strategies, implementation tools and monitoring indicators for achieving the Sustainability Objectives.

What follows represents a summary of the work completed during the 2nd Focus Group session. Specifically, this section contains a summary of the draft Objectives, Strategies, Implementation Tools and Indicators as they relate to the Four TASP Sustainability Pillar Areas. Blank spaces represent those areas where further explanation and/or more detailed work is still required.

Of note, the summary is organized in no particular order apart from the Pillars. No ranking or evaluation of the information gathered has occurred. We invite community members who were present at the meeting and those who were unable to attend to help us fill in the blank spaces and expand upon these objectives, strategies, implementation tools and indicators. This information and feedback received regarding this summary will be used formulate the draft Sustainability Plan.

3. MEETING SUMMARY

Community Well Being		
OBJECTIVE A: To ensure that all residents have reasonable access to recreation opportunities		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Promote passive recreation activities	a) Develop regulations that allow for the creation of passive use green spaces	
2. Promote well-being as a	a) Evaluate decisions based on their	

paradigm which stands beside well-doing in all our actions	potential to increase well being & well-doing in the community	
3. Strengthen community connectivity	a) Require the development of multi-modal transportation routes in new developments (where appropriate)	i) Map # of km of multi-modal trails and pathways in the community annually
	b) Protect connected greenways	i) Map % of green space and pattern of green space in the community annually.
	c) Develop accessible green/park spaces throughout Town	
	d) More community gardens or individual garden plots	
OBJECTIVE B: Maintain current and encourage future development of recreation opportunities which are appropriate to the scale of the community		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Increase recreation activities along the creeks & the river to promote awareness of the natural beauty of our Town	a) River Front Plan	
	b) Develop a Master Plan for recreation and cultural programming	
2. Develop a world class research and interpretative centre	a) Work with the community and the university to build on existing assets	
OBJECTIVE C: To support and encourage cultural diversity and creativity.		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Theatre Impresario		
2. Centre for Newcomers	a) Programming for ESL	
	b) Diversity programming	
OBJECTIVE D: To create and support an aesthetically pleasing community.		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Protect the urban forest	a) Maintain vegetation	i) Map vegetation
2. Encourage businesses to tidy up properties		
3. Have signage guidelines and assistance for small business		

4. Promote Public Art	a) Set aside funding for public art	i) Monitor number and \$\$ value of public art installations
5. Discourage littering	a) Implement littering fines	
6. Protect significant viewsapes	a) Ensure that the MDP and LUB promote and protect identified viewsapes and gateways	
7. Identify and promote "gateways" into Town		

OBJECTIVE E: Respect, celebrate and promote heritage/commit to investing in our heritage

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Provide greater opportunities for the development of our heritage and encourage groups from outside to come into the area	a. Provide regulations of bylaws with teeth for owners of designated heritage buildings	
	b. Develop heritage gardens	
2. Grow the stock of municipally owned heritage buildings	a. Implement a policy or resolution which does not allow the municipality to sell heritage buildings owned by the Town	
	b) Invest in heritage buildings	

OBJECTIVE F: To work towards a harmonized and coordinated communication strategy among disparate groups within the Town and the Region.

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Develop a communications position within the Town office	a. Hire and employee or coordinator responsible for communications	
2. Piggy back events	a. Have events like this at or during existing "forums"	
3. Recognize community volunteers	a. Reward volunteers with more recognition	

OBJECTIVE G: Ensure that Athabasca is a safe community

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Strengthen communication with RCMP and Peace Officers		

2. Implement Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)	a. Conduct CPTED Audits of Municipal Buildings and park spaces	

Strong & Supportive Social Infrastructure

OBJECTIVE A: First Class Community Health Care Network in Athabasca		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Develop a co-op program between healthcare providers and the University of Athabasca to introduce interns to rural life and work		
2. Make Athabasca a "specialized" health care service provider.	a. Research gaps in healthcare services in the region to identify a need and develop a niche service.	
3. Encourage and support efforts to recruit healthcare professionals when needed.		
4. Provide services that meet the needs and values of the community	a. Research what the community needs and values in terms of health care services.	
	b. Increase the range of health care services and service providers in the community	i. Monitor the number of health care service professionals and providers in the community (doctors, nurses, dentists etc.)
5. Encourage the development of holistic healthcare practices in the community (focus on wellness and cooperation as well as treating illness)	a. Focus efforts on education and responsibility for personal efforts to achieve balance and well being.	
	b. Increase the range of holistic health care services and service providers in the community	
OBJECTIVE B: Support and grow tertiary education opportunities		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Create an educational, inter-agency group		
OBJECTIVE C: Nurture a culture of Learning and Creativity		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Promote adult learning opportunities	a. Continuing education programs	
	b. Adult literacy programs	

	c. Work with educators to offer more training opportunities for trades	

OBJECTIVE D: Create opportunities for a wide variety of housing options

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Seniors housing and assisted living options		
2. Shelter		
3. Market and non-market housing options		

OBJECTIVE E: Athabasca is a diverse and inclusive community

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Develop programs for welcoming new Canadians		

OBJECTIVE F: Foster the well-being of all community members during every stage of life

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Early childhood Development		
2. Youth programming/counseling/recreation opportunities		
3. Adult programming/counseling/recreation opportunities		
4. Seniors programming/counseling/recreation opportunities		

OBJECTIVE G: Value and support the Town’s strong spirit of volunteerism		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Support existing volunteers		
2. Grow and expand the volunteer network and volunteer opportunities for different ages and groups within the community	a. Work with the schools to establish volunteer programs (for credit??)	
OBJECTIVE H: Improve communications and cooperation		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Improve communications and cooperation between different educational/healthcare/service providers, and business groups	a. Town provide a staff person with expertise to help manage and coordinate communications for community groups/co-ops, societies etc.	
OBJECTIVE H: Provide gathering places for community members to spontaneously interact and celebrate		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Recognize and promote the significance and location of existing community “hubs”		
2. Ensure that new development includes opportunities for spontaneous interaction and gathering	a. Include design guidelines for new development which require the design of the development to incorporate opportunities for spontaneous interactions and gathering	

Economic Prosperity

OBJECTIVE A: Business Retention – Athabasca is a healthy economic environment in which businesses can thrive

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Business recognition		
2. Encourage buying locally	a. Provide incentives for shopping locally	
	b. Implement a buy local program	
	c. Encourage people to recognize the impact their choices have on life around them	
3. Move to more community business models	a. Encourage community members to serve and help with business development	

OBJECTIVE B: Business growth and expansion

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Improve transportation options in and out of the community	a. Expand airport	
	b. Work with the province to improve the bridges (bi-pass?)	
2. Work with individuals and the development community to address development concerns and be open to adjusting policies/regulations to support innovations	a. Streamline the development permit process	

OBJECTIVE C: New business attraction

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Encourage business development downtown	a. Downtown needs to achieve its full potential before green field sites outside of downtown are developed.	
2. Support the development of new local industries which will provide additional employment opportunities	a. Encourage eco-industrial developments to support the reuse or recycling of products within the community	
3. Support entrepreneurship for youth	a. Jr. Achievement program	
4. Promote the Town to outside	a. Develop a Town "viewbook" for	

businesses	distribution at tradeshow	
	b. Actively market the Town as a place with business opportunities	
	c. Create an advertising campaign promoting Athabasca to specific groups (Camrose markets itself as a retirement community)	
OBJECTIVE D: Investment Attraction		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Ensure that the business areas within the Town (specifically the Town Centre) are aesthetically pleasing	a. Implement downtown streetscape and architectural guidelines structured around a "theme".	
2. Encourage new models of the community supporting the business community	a. Support community investment mechanisms (bonds or coops)	
	b. Recognize "angel" investors	
3. Promote quality of life and affordability	a. CPTED- to promote safety	
	b. Reasonable mill rates to support new businesses	

Environmental Integrity and Protection

OBJECTIVE A: The Town will be a good steward of its natural resources

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Ensure conformity within all of the Town's planning documents and with this Sustainability Plan	a. Make necessary revisions to master planning documents to ensure conformity	
	b. Land Use Bylaw (LUB) should include regulations for protecting - urban forests - air and sound quality - public spaces - walking paths and trails - native vegetation	i. Revise LUB ii. Map urban forests and native vegetation annually iii. Map # of KM of walking paths and trails
	c. Revise LUB to require additional walking paths	
2. Support watershed planning initiatives		
3. Increase awareness of the Town's natural assets	a. Develop a list of the natural assets that can be shared with members of the community and visitors	

OBJECTIVE B: The Town will plan and develop infrastructure for future needs with consideration for the natural environment

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Develop a trail, park and green space plan		
2. Develop more recreation amenities	a. Develop a 18 hole miniature golf course (pitch and putt) along the Twatinaw Creek while maintaining the integrity of the riparian areas. Include interpretative signage to teach people about the environmental assets in the area	
	b. Furnish and maintain Riverfront Park to a very high standard	

OBJECTIVE C: Future infrastructure developments will support/foster economic prosperity, environmental integrity, strong and supportive social infrastructure and community well being

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Assess new development/ infrastructure projects in terms of their cost effectiveness	a. Ensure that there are enough funds/budget takes into account the total lifecycle costs of projects	
2. Ensure that development today conforms the Town's future plans	a. Assess proposals in relation all of the Town's master planning documents	
3. Update LUB regularly to reflect changes and improvements		
OBJECTIVE D: Optimize use of natural resources		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Encourage landscaping practices that use native plants	a. Require new developments to include a % of native plant species and drought resistant plants	
	b. Landscape public areas with native plant species	
4. Encourage water conservation	a. Provide incentives to reduce water usage (increase cost, provide a reward of some kind, local contest)	i. Track water meter use
OBJECTIVE E: Foster local self reliance (food, energy)		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Support urban agriculture	a. Support opportunities to buy food from local producers	
	b. Community gardens	
OBJECTIVE F: Future development within the Town of Athabasca will generate no net loss to riparian areas		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Design with the land	a) Avoid channelization and straightening of streams	
	b) Maintain vegetation	i) Map vegetation

2. Require provisions for storm water treatment that focus on quality and well a control of volume	a) Restrict the runoff of untreated water into riparian areas	i) Monitor water quality of water of water being released into natural areas
	b) Require source control practices	i) Monitor water quality at source locations
	c) Control the rate and volume of discharge	a) Monitor rate and volume of discharge
	d) Encourage storm water re-use	
3. Restore important riparian areas	a) Work to restore the Twatinaw and Muskeg Creeks	
OBJECTIVE G: Encourage and facilitate “green” design		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Encourage and facilitate “green” design in new developments and retrofits	a. Use Town land to showcase green buildings	
3. Provide more educational opportunities for learning about green technologies	a. Hold workshops to train the trades and local developers about “green” building techniques and methods.	

	Governance
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OBJECTIVE A: (Transparency & Accountability) Foster an environment of civic engagement

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Educate and Encourage	a. Foster the “Courage to Lead” by building circles of trust in our community to enhance relationships between all.	
2. Restructure Municipal Planning Commission (MPC) Bylaw	a. Include a member of the public on MPC	
3. Use the Town website to share information and encourage feedback	a. Provide more information to the public about Town/Council actions	
	b. Provide a forum for feedback on the website	

OBJECTIVE B: Integration & adaptability

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Be flexible and responsive to change	a. Council to create opportunities to listen and hear the community both formally and informally	
	b. Review master planning documents and bylaws regularly	
	c. Ensure public input into major decisions	

OBJECTIVE C: Active engagement & outreach to encourage citizen participation (F2F, Grassroots, Personal)

STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Council listens to the voices of the community	a. Go out into the community. Be a more physical presence downtown – Councilors talk to business owners face to face	
	b. Invite the community to speak to Council.	
	c. Mayor/radio call-in program	
	d. Hold more frequent open houses	

OBJECTIVE D: Set strategies that are purposed-driven, results oriented & include targets & indicators		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Ensure that master planning documents are results oriented and measurable	a. Do a yearly report card to assess progress meeting identified strategies and implementation tools	
OBJECTIVE E: Base decisions on facts, efficient use of resources, long term objectives and the principles of sustainability		
STRATEGIES	IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS	INDICATORS (how do we monitor our progress)
1. Energy Audits	a. Do energy audits on public facilities	
	b. Provide community members with resources to conducted their own energy audits within their homes	
	c. Help community members track energy and water use on power and water invoices	
2. Base decisions on the long terms costs of energy efficiency	a. Require new & potential projects and developments to provide estimates for the lifecycle costs of the project if developed traditionally and if developed using "green" technologies.	
	b. Consider social and environmental costs as well as economic costs	

4. NEXT STEPS

Next steps in the work program for the project include:

1. Review comments on the meeting summary provided by stakeholders, community members, staff and Council.

Comments must be received by October 30, 2009 if they are to be considered prior to completion of the first draft of the Sustainability. Comments received after that date will be discussed at the third Focus Group meeting (FG3).

2. Complete and circulate to Stakeholders, Focus Group members, Council and staff first draft of the Plan for discussion at FG3.
3. Meet with the Community Advisory Group (CAG)/staff and Council to review draft and make changes.
4. Hold third Focus Group Session (FG3) to review the draft. The date for the third Focus Group Session is **Saturday November 14, 2009**. The meeting will be held on the 2nd floor of the Multiplex from 9:00AM to 3:00PM. The meeting is open to everyone. Lunch and refreshments will be provided by the Town.
4. Revise the draft based on feedback from FG3
5. Circulate revisions and present to Council for approval.