

Town of Huntsville

Unity Plan, Huntsville's Guide to a Sustainable Future

Community Forum 1 Summary Report

Wednesday, February 3, 2010, 7-9pm
Algonquin Theatre
Huntsville Civic Centre
37 Main Street East, Huntsville, ON



The following Summary Report was prepared by Lura Consulting. Lura is a third-party, working with the Town of Huntsville and the community to develop the Town of Huntsville's Sustainability Plan. The Report closely follows the agenda and happenings of the first community forum, held on February 3, 2010. The report is not meant as a verbatim transcript, and is subject to review. If you have any questions or comments regarding the summary, please contact:

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The preparation of this sustainable community plan was carried out with assistance from the Green Municipal Fund, a Fund financed by the Government of Canada and administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. Notwithstanding this support, the views expressed are the personal views of the authors, and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Government of Canada accept no responsibility for them.

1. Background on the Town of Huntsville's Sustainability Plan

The Town of Huntsville and Lura Consulting are working together to establish a sustainability plan ("Unity Plan") for the Town. This project will lay the foundation for Huntsville's future through an extensive community planning process that will identify a vision, measurable goals and objectives and associated actions for implementation.



Specifically, the Unity Plan will:

- Define a community vision using three pillars of sustainability: environment, social and economy, as well as municipal governance;
- Identify Huntsville's principles for sustainability;
- Identify issue areas that need to be addressed in order to achieve the vision;
- Identify and recommend actions; and,
- Develop a framework for implementing and monitoring the strategy.

Already, Huntsville has taken many important steps towards environmental sustainability and stewardship through other planning initiatives (including work that was been undertaken by the Green Plan Task Force and Ryerson University in 2009). The Unity Plan will provide an umbrella context for the significant work that has been completed to date by building on the Town's Official Plan, Strategic Plan, and the Community Master Plan, and will be developed in collaboration with the community and its stakeholders and government. Council has endorsed this planning process as the next step to guide municipal activity and to engage the community as partners in creating a joint vision. The community support built through the plan consultations will carry on to be the foundation to implement the actions identified.

Huntsville will create a community based vision of sustainability and a lasting plan that will provide guidance for the municipality, residents and the business community of Huntsville.

To achieve this goal the planning process will:

- Engage the community in the plan's development
- Build on existing sustainability planning initiatives
- Foster partnerships
- Follow an agreed upon sustainability planning framework
- Understand the unique four-seasons community and draw of Huntsville

2. Welcome, Structure and Purpose of the Meeting

Liz Nield of Lura Consulting started the meeting, outlined the structure for the session and introduced Susan Hall, Project Director and Michele Locke, sustainability consultant. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an overview of the plan development process, allow the community to provide, share ideas for the vision and high level goals, and then discuss the next steps in the process.

Mayor Claude Doughty welcomed everyone to the Community Forum and thanked everyone for coming out and noted that this was the first meeting of a journey. Mayor Doughty indicated that the sustainability plan is different from all other plans - The Official Plan, the Strategic Plan, and the Community Master Plan were all focused on deliverables and this plan will go beyond what has been done in the past. There is pressure within the community to do something different and he believes that this is the first day of the rest of our lives. We, as a community need to understand the importance of sustainability and recognize that we haven't been sustainable, and now look to the future. In the past, Huntsville has reached out to the community for input and great dialogue. That dialogue is important to this process and Mayor Doughty encouraged everyone to tell their friends and get them involved. Mayor Doughty indicated the community of Huntsville is ready for this initiative and noted that it is the quality of the input that is important, not the quantity of participants.

Mayor Doughty personally thanked Don Baker and Councillor Mary Jane Fletcher for their persistence in bringing the environment into focus at the municipal level. He thanked Councillor Mary Jane Fletcher for keeping the momentum for this project in the spotlight.

Mayor Doughty also reflected on a meeting he had on Monday with two Chiefs of two tribes about National Aboriginal Day. They discussed having that event here to celebrate on June 21, 2010, during the G8. Aboriginals have lived sustainably for generations. We need to recognize, learn from, and appreciate their culture.

Before the presentation by Susan Hall, Liz Nield introduced members of the Working Group: Colleen MacDonald, Teri Souter, Councillor Fletcher, Councillor Greaves, Andrea Smith, and Mike Harrower and thanked them for their hard work and efforts to date.

She then thanked members of Council in attendance, and offered a special thanks to the Ryerson students and the members of the Green Plan Task Force, who set the groundwork for this project and were instrumental in securing funding from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities for this project

3. Presentation

Susan Hall provided an overview of the plan development process, key sustainability theme areas identified to date and emphasized the need for community involvement in creating a plan that is specific for Huntsville. A pdf copy of the presentation is available for download at www.huntsville.ca.

4. Question and Answer Session

Participants were encouraged to ask questions of clarification about the plan and/or the process.

Q1 – Comment: Participant has a problem with the word “guidance” and would rather see a set of standards, not guidance. Does not want another set of suggestions.

A1 – Mayor Doughty - The Official Plan is a guideline. The previous Council finished it and it is mandated by the Planning Act to be reviewed every five years but it is based on a planning process. The Sustainability Plan is an overarching document.

Q2 – Does the Sustainability Plan have requirements to meet other Plan’s guidelines?

A2 – Mayor Doughty noted that most of the deliverables of the Strategic Plan have been completed, the Official Plan is mandated by the Planning Act to deal with planning issues but envisions that the Official Plan, through the review process will need to reconcile with the Sustainability Plan.

Q3 – This plan seems to be far reaching. What kind of communications will you have with neighbouring communities?

A3 – Susan Hall and Mayor Doughty - Lura Consulting will be contacting the District and neighbouring communities to schedule meetings with Mayors, CAO’s, and planning staff. Lura would like to talk to them at the goals stage, not at the end of the process. Mayor Doughty noted that the Town of Huntsville provides a lot of services to neighbouring municipalities. He feels it is important that we reach out beyond our borders and get their input. User groups don’t stop at the boundaries; they are involved in our community.

Q4 – Terms like visioning and sustainability seem too vast. How do are we different from other communities and how do we know what would work better here? If we had that information we would have a better grasp of the project.

A4 – Susan Hall - Lura Consulting brought examples of other sustainability plans from other communities. They are available in the foyer for your review.

Additional Comments from Participants

Where there is no vision, people perish. We need to know where we've been, where we need to go such as the stories Aboriginal elders tell. Could we please include arts, culture as part of the social aspect of this town. We could initiate huge changes within our hearts and values if we look to the artists and prophets. This clearly speaks to the three-legged stool – social/culture/history – we need to address those issues, they may hold more answers.

We need to look to the potters, painters, textiles – we are blessed with artists, wood carvers – arts are not rewarded for their hard work and I would like to see them rewarded. Huntsville should be a destination, not a gateway to Algonquin Park.

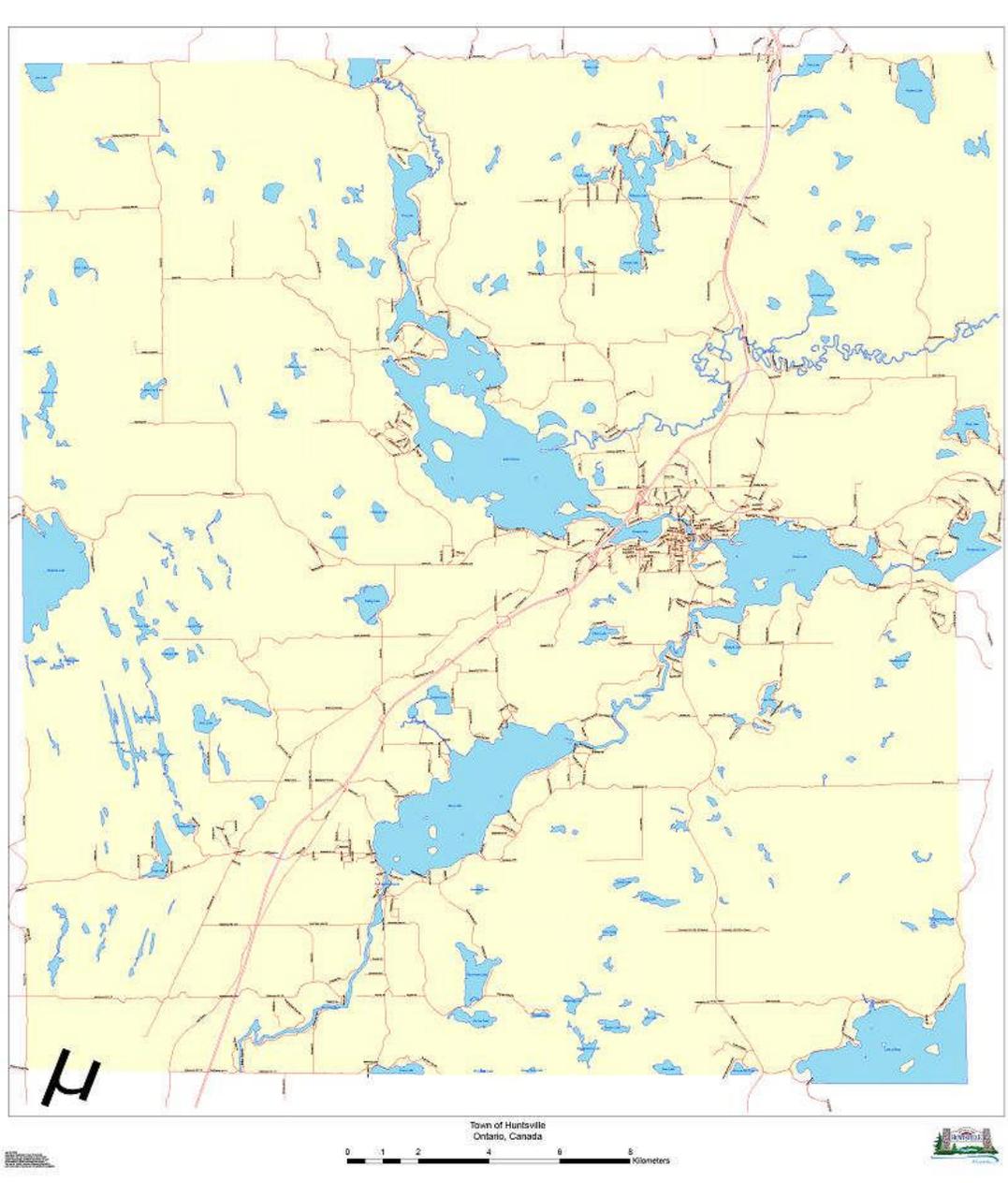
5. Working Session

Participants were invited to participate in small group discussions in the foyer outside the Algonquin Theatre. Each table was asked to select both a reporter and recorder. The recorder was to list all of the group answers under each question and the reporter would then speak to those during the plenary session.

Participants were also encouraged to mark on the map where they lived (see section 5.1), review the draft sustainability principles posted on the walls and provide any comments (see section 5.2), as well were invited to sign their names to the Community Commitment (see section 5.3) .

5.1 The Study Area

This large map has been printed, laminated and mounted. Participants in this event were asked to place a dot indicating where they reside. As Lura Consulting goes out into the community, each group of participants will be encouraged to do the same. This will give an indication of two things, which areas of Huntsville are participating and covered in dots and which areas are lacking dots therefore lacking participation. Lura will then focus on reaching out to those under represented areas to be sure that everyone in Huntsville has an opportunity to participate in the community-based sustainability plan.



5.2 Draft Sustainability Principles

Draft Sustainability Principles were posted and attendees were encouraged to read and offer comments and suggestions. No comments or suggestions were received.

Town of Huntsville's Draft Sustainability Principles
February 2010

1. Provide a long term guide for this community that balances economic, environment, and social needs.
2. Provide a high quality of life for everyone in the community.
3. Achieve a strong and resilient economy and a thriving social environment.
4. Protect and restore biodiversity and natural ecosystems. Provide this community with the necessary tools to be good stewards of the environment.
5. Build upon the positive characteristics of this community including its human and cultural values, history, and its natural and economic systems.
6. Foster participation and enable a collaborative effort to work toward a common, sustainable future.
7. Enable continual improvement of the sustainability plan through ongoing monitoring of plan performance and community needs.

The plan is just the beginning...

5.3 Community Commitment

I will make a conscious choice to participate in the Unity Plan, A Guide to a Sustainable Huntsville. I understand that making a difference and being good stewards of our community can be as easy as a few changes in my daily routine. I want to join Huntsville Town Council in caring and protecting for our town, our country and our world and work towards a better future.

I pledge to get involved in the planning and implementation of The Unity Plan, A Guide to a Sustainable Huntsville.

27 participants signed the Community Commitment.

5.4 Highlights of the Small Group Discussions

Participants were asked to move to the foyer to one of a number of tables and were given a double sided sheet of paper. The one side contained the nine themes of sustainability that had been identified in the FCM application, as well as three additional themes that had been identified by the community to date.

These themes included: Transportation, Social Well-Being, Community Engagement and Education, Municipal Operations, Critical Needs: air, water, food, and energy, Land Use Planning, Healthcare, Affordable Housing, Energy, Economic Development, Recreation, and Environmental Protection.

The other side of the page contained four questions:

1. What do you love about Huntsville today?
2. What do you want Huntsville to become in the future?
3. What are the challenges to getting there?
4. What do we need to take advantage of to get there?

Participants were asked to answer the four questions, using the sustainability themes as a guide when formulating their responses.

The following is a listing of the responses to the individual questions:

1. What do you love about Huntsville today?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All of the art everywhere ○ Size – big enough and small enough ○ Surrounded by nature and we want to sustain air and water quality ○ Main street alive despite mall and big box stores ○ Wonderful hospital and doctors ○ Community spirit – helpful to others and causes ○ Algonquin Theatre ○ Open to alternative ways of being – medical and spiritual ○ Kids will always want to come back to visit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People are friendly, courteous, not in a hurry (but becoming more rushed) ○ Lots of places for kids to play ○ Trails ○ Art, culture, theatre ○ Natural setting ○ Wonderful place to raise a family ○ Excellent sports facilities ○ Dynamic energy ○ Huntsville High School programs ○ Community centre ○ Wide varieties of opportunities ○ Small town atmosphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Healthy, active lifestyle ○ Focus on family ○ Vigorous town centre ○ Vibrant arts community ○ Accessibility ○ Arts groups ○ People are fun ○ Dark skies ○ Elbow room ○ Manageable size ○ Sense of community ○ Fresh air ○ Clean water ○ Safe place to raise children ○ Recreational, arts and cultural opportunities ○ Natural beauty

2. What do you want Huntsville to become in the future?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Model sustainable community ○ Smart growth ○ Protected shoreline ○ Inclusive – for all ○ Tolerant and diverse ○ Limited sprawl ○ Protected rural character ○ Maintain things we love today- people, nature ○ Public art gallery ○ A leading example of sustainable landscapes ○ Main street closed down at least on weekends ○ Connections from one trail to another ○ Green energy educational opportunities ○ Living wages available to all ○ Prosperous, sustainable living for diverse groups ○ More opportunities for green jobs ○ Expand opportunities world culture by bringing them here 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lots of small business ○ Improved waste collection ○ Do not want to be another Barrie ○ Preservation and expansion of green space ○ An arts/culture scene that supports the artists ○ Even more accessibility ○ Safer for bike riders ○ A destination for cycling and trails ○ More opportunities to get people out of their cars ○ Reduction in poverty ○ Seasonal workers that have lower incomes are welcomed with an attitude of inclusiveness ○ Young families moving back ○ More creative thinking and teaching of all curriculum ○ Be the leader in the designation of Muskoka as an arts community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A centre of training and education (environment, medicine, arts, tourism) ○ Huntsville in charge of Huntsville – not the District ○ A “Sparks Street” type of mall from Centre St. to Brunel ○ Natural environment as the overarching umbrella ○ Planning decisions to include bike lanes, bike trails and set standards for these opportunities ○ Encourage knowledge-based economy ○ Clean energy ○ Recognition of artists ○ Maintain and support grass roots organizations ○ More enlightened use of recreational vehicles like boats and snow mobiles ○ Less chlorine in drinking water ○

3. What are the challenges to getting there?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People need to buy in ○ People need to have pride in ownership ○ Unifying our goals ○ Shifting attitudes toward sustainability ○ Understanding that cultural and ecological shift feeds economic opportunity ○ Typically the economic focus wins ○ Recognize the environment as an icon ○ Make sustainability the bottom line ○ People need to understand sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Good living wage jobs ○ Opportunities for all demographics ○ Seasonal poverty ○ What we are willing to pay ○ Finding ways to encourage green industry ○ New uses for development charges (eg 1% go to arts) ○ Educating town staff about available ecological products ○ Contracted landscapers need to use best practices ○ Consistent use of the same contractors ○ Awareness and mindset 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council decisions need to follow best practices (eg bylaws, tall buildings above tree line, standards in place are not being upheld) ○ Sustaining a broad economy and related jobs ○ Maintaining and protecting our natural environment ○ Identifying threats to our natural environment ○ Achieving a balance between competing interests ○ Transition standards – maintain from Council to Council

4. What do you need to take advantage of to get there?		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interact with other model communities ○ Adopt core values as a community ○ Open, clear communication ○ Technological and scientific skills ○ Education and awareness ○ Make Huntsville a designated arts community ○ Education ○ Work with University of Waterloo ○ Funding for arts (see Art Spark) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attract diverse jobs ○ Focus on eco-friendly industry (new energy etc) ○ Eco-tourism opportunities ○ Clear, reasonable regulations that are enforced ○ Incentives to attract eco industry ○ Use resources we own ○ Get the skilled labour currently not working back to work ○ Opportunities for visual/literary arts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sustainability Plan should be a living document ○ Ongoing training for staff to make good decisions ○ More active transportation ○ Increased public relations – let the world know about the great things happening here ○ Artists working together with the town – take advantage of what we already have and keep developing

6. Plenary Session

Reporters from the small group discussions were asked to report their top two or three answers for each of the four questions. A collection of the answers are recorded in Section 5.4 above.

7. Next Steps

Input from the community will continue being sought through the distribution and collection of questionnaires available online, at the Town Office, the Public Library and at community events throughout the next few months.

The information gathered at this Community Forum will be used in conjunction with information from the Working Group and Council members to develop draft community goals. Those draft goals will be presented for review at the next Community Forum on March 16, 2010 and will also be made available at the Town of Huntsville Offices and electronically online at www.huntsville.ca

Participants of this meeting were encouraged to bring home questionnaires and give them to friends or family members. All those who attended will be informed about future community events, as well as provided with information about the plan's accomplishments. Participants who provided us with their email addresses have been added to the Stakeholder list and will be updated through email. If you would like to be added to the Stakeholder List, email mlocke@lura.ca or call 705.571.0171.

Heads of Council and Council in Attendance	Working Group Members in Attendance	Lura Team Members in Attendance
Mayor Doughty	Andrea Smith	Susan Hall
Councillor Fletcher	Mike Harrower	Liz Nield
Councillor Greaves	Councillor Greaves	Michele Locke
Councillor Coleman	Councillor Fletcher	
	Teri Souter	
	Colleen MacDonald	