



2017 Community Excellence Awards

Application Form

Best Practices, Excellence in Action

Please complete and return the application form by **Friday, June 23, 2017**. If you have any questions, contact UBCM at awards@ubcm.ca or (250) 356-5193.

SECTION 1: Applicant Information

Local Government: Town of Gibsons

Complete Mailing Address: P.O.Box 340

474 South Fletcher Road

Gibsons, BC V0N 1V0

Contact Person: Emanuel Machado

Position: CAO

Phone: 604 886 2274

E-mail: emachado@gibsons.ca

SECTION 2: Staff Contact

An invitation to attend the UBCM Community Excellence Awards Breakfast Reception will be sent out via e-mail in early September. Winners will not be named before the ceremony.

Please provide the contact information for the person in your office who should receive and reply to the invitation, on behalf of the elected officials/staff who will be in attendance at the UBCM Convention.

Staff Contact Person: Emanuel Machado

Position: Chief Administrative Officer

Phone: 604 886 2274

E-mail: emachado@gibsons.ca

SECTION 3: Project/Program Information

1. Name of the Project/Program:

Town of Gibsons Eco-Asset Initiative

2. Project/Program Summary. Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less

Gibsons is pioneering the management of natural assets (e.g. green space, aquifers, foreshore) to provide municipal services (e.g. storm water management, flood mitigation, water purification) using asset and financial management concepts traditionally used for engineered infrastructure. This approach requires innovation in assessing ecosystem functions and services, expressing them in terms of risks, cost and municipal service and imbedding them in core financial and operating systems. The cornerstone of the approach is a natural capital management policy: in 2014, Gibsons became the first municipality in North America to deem nature a municipal asset and give it the same consideration as traditional capital assets. Stated differently, Gibsons committed to operate / maintain natural assets in the same way as engineered assets. The project has reduced financial risk, lowered capital and operating expenditures, resulted in better management of natural assets, increased resilience, and scaled-up through a spin-off Municipal Natural Assets Initiative.

SECTION 4: Project Details

Please answer each question in 250 words or less (our judges value directness and brevity). If you experience difficulty answering a particular question, consider the aspects of your program that may relate to the question and show us how they are linked. Remember to include measurable results whenever possible.

3. Results. How has this program/project resulted in excellence in action in your local government and community?

The project demonstrates excellence by addressing complex issues of concern to Gibsons and other communities, through a single, replicable approach. In terms of the concerns addressed:

(a) In Gibsons, across North America and beyond, urban infrastructure is in poor shape and/or faces pressure from climate change and population growth. Costs and risks to municipalities are increasing as a result, and solutions are required urgently.

(b) Many of Earth's vital natural systems are in decline, with only limited corresponding changes to the practices of governments and business to halt this decline.

The Gibsons Eco-Asset Initiative addresses these issues through comprehensive stewardship of natural assets, using innovative new tools and approaches.

The results include (a) demonstrably managing peak flows from storm events by preserving and better managing existing natural assets while foregoing an engineered option (b) providing community drinking water for the community for the foreseeable future through increased preventative maintenance and without relying on engineered water purification (c) reduced organizational risk by better understanding the Town's dependence on natural assets (d) reduced financial risk by limiting future capital and operating expenditures.

The approach is replicable & broadly relevant because it is based on modern asset management systems with which municipalities are increasingly familiar and required to use. Already, 5 Canadian municipalities are replicating the Gibsons approach through the

Municipal Natural Assets Initiative; this number will double in 2018.

4. Service Delivery. How has the implementation of this program/project improved services within your local government and your community?

The project has required a fundamental rethinking of how Town's departments interact and collaborate. This has led to a major contribution to the sustainable delivery of core services in Gibsons. To elaborate:

1 - The purpose of asset management is to deliver services sustainably. The Eco-Asset Initiative is built on the asset management platform and has generated tools and approaches to include natural assets within traditional asset and financial management processes.

2 - Asset management generally, and the Eco-Asset Strategy in particular, require integrated efforts across departments (e.g. Parks, Engineering, Public Works) to maintain and enhance asset performance. This, in turn, requires new ways of thinking, planning and coordinating.

3 - Therefore, to achieve a high degree of success in both asset management and the Eco-Asset Management Initiative, the Town of Gibsons has made integrated, team approaches the new norm in the Town of Gibsons. This is a departure from traditional, siloed departmental approaches that prevail in many communities. For example, multiple departments must collaborate to manage White Tower Park to allow the Town to meet the goal of ensuring the Park delivers stormwater management services in perpetuity.

5. Effectiveness. How is the program/project more efficient and/or effective than it was before?

Prior to the Gibsons Eco-Asset initiative, the Town did not have a sound understanding of its reliance on key natural assets such as the Gibsons Aquifer, which provides drinking water; White Tower Park, which channels and absorbs stormwater; or the foreshore, which protects the downtown core from storm surges and sea-level rise.

This meant that the Town was exposed to risk in the event that any of these natural assets failed; and that it was not managing the assets in an optimal or even deliberate manner.

Now, the Town has reduced risk by: understanding dependence on natural assets; designing the smallest possible, lowest risk, lowest cost and most efficient possible asset portfolio; and, adapting to climate change and variability and increasing community resilience by restoring forested areas, creeks and foreshore areas.

In other words, the initiative has had dramatic impacts on the way we understand risk and resilience and on what we consider to be assets, and on how we manage our assets.

6. Economic Impact. How has the program/project saved the community money and/or resources or encouraged economic development?

- Our asset portfolio already contains several natural assets, aquifer, creeks, ponds, forest, etc. Recent decisions will ensure an expansion of the stormwater assets at White

Tower Park. Our experience shows that the more natural the asset, the risk and operational costs are lower than an engineered alternative.

- the Gibsons Aquifer provides water storage to supply approximately 70% of the projected population of Gibsons with no capital costs and operating costs limited to \$30,000/year for monitoring – a fraction of the cost stormwater management services.

- In the White Tower Park forest, approximately \$15,000 is spent / 3 years for dredging sedimentation; by contrast, engineered solutions would have otherwise cost \$3.5-4.0M.

7. Accountability. How has this program/project improved accountability to citizens of your local government?

First, and in general terms, the Eco-Asset Strategy has quantified and made very clear to the community our dependence on natural assets to provide core services, and the financial risk to the Town if these assets are not appropriately managed.

Second, we have codified our responsibility for effective management of the natural assets by: placing them in the asset management register, developing North America's first asset management policy (2014) to incorporate natural assets and require that these assets receive the same consideration as engineered assets; adding a note in financial statements (2013) acknowledging the value of natural assets to the community; recognizing in the Official Community Plan (2015) the value of natural assets and setting out policies for their identification and management; and, in our Strategic Plan (2016-2018) identifying the advancement of the Town's natural asset approach as a priority.

Finally, we communicate regularly our progress on commitments in these policies. For example, we use our annual public meetings, where our financial statements are presented, as an opportunity for engagement/discussion on the opportunities and challenges of managing natural assets.

8. Teamwork. Tell us about the teamwork involved in making this program/project possible.

As noted in the response to (4), teamwork and new ways of working together have been fundamental to the success of the Eco-Asset Strategy and, accordingly, to sustainable service delivery.

9. Innovation. What makes this program/project innovative and creative?

Making an environmental case for preserving natural assets is straightforward. Making a risk, financial management and service delivery case that resonates across departments, silos and disciplines both within and outside municipalities, has required substantial innovation including:

- A unique natural capital valuation process, with a focus on municipal services delivered by nature, was developed/tested in Gibsons. Led by the David Suzuki Foundation, the valuation/model uses a blended approach of biophysical condition assessment of the asset and the analysis of its socio-economic implications (identifying the value of the services provided, compared with an engineering alternative). This new approach/model has

fundamentally changed infrastructure related decision-making.

- An Asset Management Policy (2014) recognizes nature as the Town's most valuable asset. Moreover, it changes the definition of infrastructure to include natural, biomimicry and engineered assets, a first in North America.

- The 2013 Financial Statements acknowledge the Town true "worth", despite the limitations of accounting standards.

10. Sustainability. What measures have you put in place to ensure the continued operation of this initiative? (e.g. staff time, resources, financial)

Managing the Town's natural assets is done under our overall asset management plans. Developing the policy and the strategy had some initial costs, including:

- approximately 0.5 FTE / year since 2013

- approximately \$15,000/year in consulting services for general support

- one-time \$45,000 cost for assessment and modeling the services provided by forest asset (White Tower Park)

From a policy perspective, we have secured the project we have secured the future of the project by imbedding it in core strategic documents (see section 7).

11. Best Practices. How do the processes behind the program/project, and the subsequent results, serve as an example of best practices?

1 - There is strong evidence that, notwithstanding the policy and scientific focus on preserving life-sustaining natural capital and ecosystem services, operational changes in business and government are limited. Gibsons is a marked, good practice departure from this trend. The Town has pioneered an approach that relies on principles of asset management, financial planning and ecology, with the goal of creating a framework for the management of natural capital at a municipal level, and all the results to date indicate that this approach delivers multiple benefits (risk reduction, cost savings, resilience).

2 - Uptake of standard asset management processes across municipalities is uneven, and the inclusion of natural assets, far moreso. Indeed, the project team has found no other local governments that have pursued a municipal natural asset approach. However, validation at a 2015 multi-stakeholder workshop and the fact that other municipalities are now seeking to refine, replicate and scale up the approach through the Municipal Natural Assets Initiative indicates that the Eco-Asset strategy is, indeed, a good practice for others to adapt and adopt.

3 - Gibsons is the first municipality in North America to deem natural assets to be an asset equivalent to engineered assets. This and other tools developed by the Town serve as specific good practice measures that others can adopt.

12. Transferability. How is this program/project transferable to other local governments?

The Town has already scaled the approach across several community assets (e.g. from the Aquifer to the forest and then foreshore).

Furthermore, as a Convening Partner in the Municipal Natural Assets Initiative we are helping to scale the approach across Canada.

As noted elsewhere, through the Municipal Natural Assets Initiative the initial Gibsons example is now being piloted in 5 Canadian cities, with more planned for 2018.

13. Knowledge Sharing. What helpful advice would you share with other communities looking to embark on a similar project?

1. Start with an overall commitment to effective asset management within the community;
2. Consider an asset management policy, bylaw or financial statement that directs the municipality to consider the role of natural assets within an asset management strategy;
3. Inventory the community's natural assets to better understand their scope, scale and relevance;
4. Review the Town of Gibsons Eco-Asset strategy document for advice: <http://www.gibsons.ca/eco-assets/>; and,
5. Determine whether becoming a Municipal Natural Assets Initiative project is appropriate; see: <https://www.facebook.com/municipalnaturalassets/>.

14. Additional Information. Please share any other information you think may help support your submission.

1. Better management of natural assets has resulted in additional co-benefits to the community, including:
 - a) Preserving and increasing vital habitat and biodiversity. The focus of the initiative was on identifying ecosystems services that provide a municipal/civil service (water storage, treatment, etc.). However, restoring and preserving natural areas also leads to enhanced pollination and habitat, for example.
 - b) Increasing health benefits by preserving recreational areas for citizens. For example, a key beneficiary of the improvements to White Tower Park are the senior citizens who reside in the neighboring property. In addition to the treatment and conveyance of storm water, the Park is a gathering place, great for walking, biking and connecting with nature.
2. We have done our utmost to share our experience with others. For example:
 - a) Since 2013, close to 100 presentations and workshops have been made, including at international conferences (World Forum of Natural Capital 2015 and GLOBE 2016, New Zealand workshops/webinars 2017, to politicians, professional associations, conservation groups, municipal staff, schools and the general public. Videos, publications, public art,

technical and guidance documents are regularly shared.

b) we act as a "living lab" for the Municipal Natural Assets Initiative, through which the Gibsons Eco-Asset Approach is being refined, replicated and scaled up in other Canadian communities.

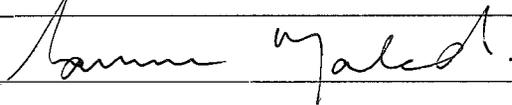
SECTION 5: Signature

Applications are required to be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant.

Name: Emanuel Machado

Title: CAO

Signature:



Date: June 20, 2017

Applications should be submitted as Word or PDF files. If you choose to submit your application by e-mail, hard copies do not need to follow.

Submit applications to Local Government Program Services, Union of BC Municipalities

E-mail: awards@ubcm.ca or mail: 525 Government Street, Victoria, BC, V8V 0A8

