



**2012 COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS
Category Worksheet**

BEST PRACTICES, General

Name of Local Government: City of Burnaby

Project/Program Title: Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy (2011)

Project Summary Paragraph

Please provide a summary of your project/program in 150 words or less.

The Burnaby Sustainability Strategy is a bold, innovative and visionary plan that will guide the City's activities and resource allocations in the social realm over the next 10 or so years. It articulates a social sustainability vision, three long-term sustainability goals, and seven key theme areas for action. The Strategy proposes 127 initiatives for the City and others, acting within their respective mandates or in collaboration, to move Burnaby towards the vision and goals.

The Strategy was developed over a fifteen month process in 2010/2011 through an extensive public consultation process which involved almost 800 Burnaby citizens. Its contents reflect the concerns and aspirations of a wide variety of people who live, work, play, and learn in Burnaby. Many more citizens and community organizations will be involved in implementation, either as consultees on implementation of specific actions, or as implementation partners.

Project Analysis

Please answer the question in 300 words or less in 11 pt Arial font (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.

1. SERVICES

How has the implementation of this program/project improved services in your community?

The Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy is intended to improve service and program delivery in Burnaby by providing a lens to focus City and community attention on shared, articulated goals and actions for community betterment. Although the City of Burnaby has a long and progressive track-record of policies, programs, and services which improve community social well-being, the creation of a social vision and a plan for accomplishing that vision provides a more orderly focus for the City's activities in the social sphere, and a thoughtful, incremental approach to tackling intractable social issues. The Strategy explicitly identifies those actions that are City responsibilities, and those for which players other than the City need to take a leadership role, and it identifies the range of stakeholders who can help to move the initiative forward by working together. Such an approach helps to eliminate duplication of efforts and

working at cross-purposes on the part of multiple individuals and organizations, while maximizing community resources, energy and knowledge.

Implementation of the Strategy is in the early stages, but already we see increased collaboration around service delivery, as evidenced by the strategic planning efforts of the Burnaby Inter-Agency Council, Fraser Health's Healthy Communities Partnership, the Voices of Burnaby Seniors Task Force, and other community partners working together towards implementation of actions in the Strategy.

2. EFFECTIVENESS

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

Although the City of Burnaby has achieved many successes in the social domain, an explicit focus on social sustainability is new to the City. The Strategy fills a void not previously addressed: creation of a collectively agreed-upon social vision of where the community wants to be in fifteen years, and an action plan which clearly defines the City's mandate in the social realm and its role in achieving the vision. The Strategy clarifies how the community of Burnaby can build on its considerable strengths and assets to improve and grow while retaining the special things that make it welcoming and productive.

The ultimate effectiveness of the Strategy is greatly enhanced by the many partnerships required for implementation, and the extensive public consultation process that accompanied its development, thus ensuring that a wide cross-section of citizens have a stake in its application. The consultation process consisted of several components, as follows.

First, to guide development of the Strategy, Council appointed a 25 member Steering Committee composed of Burnaby community leaders and chaired by Mayor Corrigan. The Steering Committee met six times during the strategy development process, and brought thoughtful reflection, energy, engagement and creativity to its task.

Second, the City further tapped the collective experience and insight of the community by assembling another fifty Burnaby citizens to work with Steering Committee members in six thematic Working Groups. The Working Groups each met four times.

Third, the City conducted a public consultation process on the draft Strategy, produced by the Steering Committee and based on the work of the Working groups. Methods of consultation included public open houses in each of the four geographic quadrants of the city; a survey, available both on-line and in hard copy; and presentations to targeted demographic groups. Overall, 700 Burnaby citizens participated in the consultation process.

3. ECONOMIC IMPACT

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

A goal of the Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy is to strengthen Burnaby's overall well-being by complementing Burnaby's related and mutually supportive Economic Development Strategy, updated in 2007, and the forthcoming Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

As noted above, the creation of a social sustainability strategy which encourages multiple stakeholders to work together helps to ensure that duplication and competition are reduced, and that scarce resources are maximized.

Moreover, a number of actions in the Strategy have economic implications. In fact, the first ten actions focus on providing economic security for individuals and families, and include a call to the Burnaby Board of Trade and local business associations to support the establishment of social enterprises, and to enhance opportunities for job training, mentorship and practicum placements for new immigrants, youth, people with disabilities and others with employment challenges. Other actions in the Strategy suggest the City prioritize local production and social purchasing, work with the local business community on corporate social responsibility, and expand the “Business Watch” Program¹ to reduce business losses due to criminal activity. In recognition of the role that business can play in achieving social sustainability, the then President and CEO of the Burnaby Board of Trade served on the Strategy’s Steering Committee, and the Board and Burnaby’s several business associations are identified as key implementation partners in numerous actions.

4. ACCOUNTABILITY

How has this program/project improved upon accountability to the community’s citizens?

The extensive public consultation process underlying strategy development establishes a high degree of accountability. Moreover, it was a City priority that the consultation be inclusive, accessible, and responsive to citizen views.

First, Steering Committee and Working Group members were carefully selected to ensure a broad cross-section of Burnaby’s diverse population.

Second, Working Group members conducted a “community check-in” with a wide range of groups and individuals to gather suggestions as to how to realize the proposed social sustainability vision. More than 800 ideas were gathered. Analysis of those ideas revealed a set of over-arching opportunities that became the three goals and seven strategic priorities for the Strategy. Many of the 800 ideas are reflected as actions.

Third, opportunities to provide feedback on the draft Strategy were advertised through a number of vehicles in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Punjabi, and French.

Fourth, in addition to geographic considerations, open house venues were selected for wheelchair accessibility. Childcare and language translation were offered.

Fifth, potential survey responders who were not comfortable with English were invited to contact specific multi-lingual City staff for assistance with completing the survey.

Sixth, the 19 staff presentations or workshops on the draft Strategy were targeted to demographic groups who were unlikely to participate through the open house and survey processes. In this way, the views of youth, seniors, people with disabilities, homeless people, cultural minorities and newcomers to Canada were obtained.

¹ Modeled on the Block Watch Program, Business Watch focuses on improving information sharing and reporting of suspicious activity within the retail community, and between businesses and the police. The program helps to reduce retail theft, reduces police calls for service, and promotes safer work environments.

As a result of the consultation process, twenty-nine additional actions were created to address perceived shortcomings in the draft strategy.

While development of the Strategy clearly provides for accountability, implementation will also do so, as community stakeholders will be involved both in the fulfillment of specific actions, and in fine-tuning to ensure the Strategy remains relevant and reflective of community goals, priorities, and needs over time.

5. AWARENESS

How has this program/project created more awareness in the community about local government actions?

Development of the Strategy and the depth of public involvement in it provided a forum for a dialogue between the City and Burnaby citizens about the role and responsibilities of municipal government, and its jurisdictional and resource limitations, particularly in the social domain. Steering Committee and Working Group members were provided with a comprehensive overview of the responsibilities of the various levels of government, and of the many socially-oriented programs, policies, procedures and initiatives their local government has engaged in over the years. Staff presentations on the draft Social Sustainability Strategy and the open houses also afforded the opportunity to raise community awareness of local government's mandate, and Burnaby's long history of positive and active involvement in social matters. Significant learning occurred on both sides in the iterative consultative process.

The Strategy itself provides an overview of the municipal mandate, highlights civic engagement as a key theme, and articulates examples of how citizens can currently participate in the City's decision-making processes. Actions in the "Civic and Community Engagement" section of the Strategy focus on enhancing citizen involvement in local government through production of a how-to guide about becoming more involved and providing one's input at the civic level, expansion of Burnaby's public consultation programs, and sponsorship of a campaign to increase voter participation in municipal elections. The Strategy also clearly defines which actions the City can accomplish on its own within its mandate, and which actions require others to take the lead, sometimes with City support.

6. TEAMWORK

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

The Steering Committee, facilitated by professional facilitators, worked as a team through the entire process, commencing with the development of a social sustainability vision, and ending with agreement on a final Strategy to propose to Burnaby Council.

Each of the Working Groups operated as a team, exploring within their specific topic areas² Burnaby's strengths and challenges, the changes they hoped to see in the next ten to fifteen years, the required conditions for those changes, and possible measures to facilitate the conditions and the changes.

² Working Group titles: Prosperous City, Age-Friendly City, Healthy City, Engaged City, Diverse City, Peaceful City.

City staff from three departments formed a strong team with the consultants engaged to assist in the process.

Development of the Strategy also required significant collaboration with a multitude of disciplines both internal to the City and external, and implementation will depend on the same. The necessity for partnerships or teamwork to move the Strategy forward is explicit in both the Strategy framework, and in the actual actions. This partnership model serves to expand the scope and reach of the document.

For example, within the City structure, the Library and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services will collaborate to showcase local artists and writers; the Planning, Engineering and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services departments will jointly develop pedestrian accessibility guidelines and work to promote walking; and the City's Emergency Program Office and Communications Officer will work jointly on an awareness campaign on emergency preparedness. Outside of the City structure, actions encourage the City to support Fraser Health in delivering drug and tobacco reduction programs, the Burnaby School District in expanding use of school buildings by the community on weekends and evenings, the Burnaby Board of Trade in promoting Corporate Social Responsibility, and Burnaby-based non-profit societies in sponsoring neighbourhood-building activities.

7. INNOVATION

What makes this program/project innovative and creative?

First, while a number of communities have developed social plans, Burnaby's focus on improving social well-being through an integrated lens of sustainability is an innovative and creative twist on traditional planning practice. In fact, Burnaby's strategy is one of very few focused social sustainability strategies in the country. This may have to do, in part, with the challenge of even defining such an esoteric term as "social sustainability" and with the limited mandate municipal governments have in social matters.

Second, development of the Strategy has contributed to the planning profession by introducing the interwoven concepts of social, environmental, and economic sustainability to a wider audience of community members who are not typically engaged in or aware of planning work.

Third, the seven strategic priorities outlined in the Strategy³ channel the City's attention and efforts into seven avenues that interact with and support each other. Each strategic priority is linked to one or more of the City's goals, and builds upon existing strengths.

Finally, through the supportive interconnections between social, environmental and economic sustainability, Burnaby will make progress on all three areas over time. With the expected adoption of an environmental sustainability strategy in 2014, Burnaby will have braided all three strands of sustainability⁴ into its policies and practices. This will provide a solid foundation for the continued strengthening of Burnaby's overall well-being, and ensure that the City is a local government leader in sustainability initiatives, generally and in social sustainability, specifically.

³ The Strategic Priorities are: Meeting Basic Needs; Celebrating Diversity and Culture; Getting Involved; Learning for Life; Enhancing Neighbourhoods; Getting Around and Protecting our Community.

⁴ In Burnaby's Strategy, the oft-cited sustainability concept of "culture" has been included in "social" sustainability.

8. SUSTAINABILITY

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

To ensure its application, the following five implementation steps are articulated within the Strategy:

- prioritize actions for implementation in Phase One (the first 5 years), including sequencing of actions. In prioritizing, all actions in the Strategy were assessed against twenty criteria, ranging from the availability of resources and the timing implications of forming new relationships to an action's ability to forge links across the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability, and its capacity to foster public participation and engagement. This task was undertaken by an internal, inter-departmental City team and in partnership with major external partners who were consulted regarding their capacity to participate in implementation of specific actions, their priorities, and their timelines for those priorities.
- develop workplans for the first year and future years of Phase One. Draft workplans have been prepared by staff for consideration by Council.
- implement Phase One. Implementation of the Strategy is meant to take place over the next 10 to 15 years, with 2012/13 serving as Year 1. Many of the actions are complex and will require considerable groundwork, such as the establishment of new partnerships and the securing of long-term funding, before they can be realized. Nevertheless, quick progress on and/or achievement of 26 of the 127 actions in the Strategy has already occurred. It should also be noted that a considerable number of actions involve the continuation of important work the City is already involved in – and that work on those actions continues.
- monitor and report on progress to Council and Burnaby citizens on an annual basis.
- refresh the Strategy after five years and adopt a new strategy after 10 or so years.

9. BEST PRACTICES

What sets this program/project apart as a winning idea? Why should it be considered a best practice, in comparison to other similar programs?

First, Burnaby's examination of social issues through an integrated focus on sustainability is unique. Many of the actions in the Strategy target economic and environmental factors in addition to the primary social factors. An action focusing on development of a community-based food strategy, for example, encourages healthy food choices and local ecologically-sound and affordable food production, and could also positively impact individual health and economic security, reduce carbon emissions from food transportation, improve the financial viability of the local food sector, and celebrate Burnaby food culture(s).

Second, the Strategy is truly "the people's document", with the goals, strategic priorities and actions reflecting the opinions and aspirations of many Burnaby citizens.

Third, the actions are concrete and practical, and build on an existing foundation of solid achievements and strengths. Actions are identified as fitting into one of three categories, as follows:

- Building on our Foundation: actions which continue and improve on work in which the City is already engaged
- Expanding our Horizons: actions which take the City well beyond previous initiatives in areas of City activity

- **Breaking New Ground:** actions which move the City significantly forward in current areas of City activity and/or take the City into new areas in which it can demonstrate leadership in social sustainability.

Finally, the Strategy has been designed to ensure that it is accessible and useful to the community for which it was created. It has a user-friendly structure that citizens can reference when interacting with the City. Although 104 pages long, the Strategy is filled with colourful photos of Burnaby scenes and events in which citizens can possibly even find themselves depicted, and uses multiple graphic forms to deliver information. Moreover, the coil binding on the hard copy of the Strategy provides ease of use for those with limited manual dexterity.

10. TRANSFERABILITY

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

The Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy demonstrates how local government, with a very limited mandate in the social realm, can wield considerable influence in the social sphere without assuming the responsibilities of senior levels of government.

Although currently unusual, using the perspective of sustainability when examining social issues can, with intention and focus, be accomplished by other communities seeking to undertake similar work. The strong emphasis on public participation, particularly at the front end of the process, can also be easily replicated in any number of planning scenarios. Other local governments can build on their own previous processes to ensure responsive strategy development that reflects their local circumstances.

Lessons learned through development of both the Social Sustainability Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy can also be transferred internally to ensure the use of best practices in the imminent preparation of Burnaby's Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

11. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

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

The Strategy was founded on a 'layered', focused, front-end consultation that was balanced by later opportunities for general public consultation. The front-end consultation included the formation of a Steering Committee and six thematic Working Groups, and a community 'check in' process. The use of a similar 'layered' process is recommended for other communities embarking on a comparable project as it provided a strong, flexible basis of ideas and community support for this unique initiative.

When consulting with the public, it is important "to go to the people" rather than expecting them to come to you. Although a considerable number of citizens completed the City's survey and/or attended the public open houses on the draft strategy, by far the largest number of citizens was reached by the staff presentations to the specific groups outlined in Question 4, above. Their comments and feedback greatly helped to refine and enrich the final adopted strategy.

The City engaged a graphic facilitator to assist the Steering Committee to examine important community values and develop the social sustainability vision. This visual, art-based facilitation helped to make a potentially challenging exercise fun and engaging. The colourful and, at times, humorous depiction of the Committee's thought processes was later recreated as a

banner/mural which was displayed at all Steering Committee meetings as a symbol of the Committee's first major accomplishment, and attractive graphics lifted from the mural appear in many places in the adopted Strategy.

12. TELL US MORE

Please share any other information you think may help us better understand your submission.

With adoption of its Social Sustainability Strategy, Burnaby is one step closer to Council's goal of becoming Canada's most sustainable community through the development and implementation of a trio of economic, social and environmental sustainability strategies.

As is evident from this submission, Burnaby citizens were very engaged in the development of their Social Sustainability Strategy. Below is a selection of citizen comments received during the public consultation on the draft Strategy, which illustrates this strong sense of connection.

"I am proud of Burnaby for being such a progressive city. Burnaby has the ability to influence other communities. I look forward to watching the positive changes..."

"The Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy was an excellent idea, and should help put Burnaby on the forefront of Canadian municipalities in terms of vision and comprehensive approach to living in a modern, urban setting."

"It is a very thorough and detailed document. It appears a lot of effort has gone to develop the document...Burnaby will continue to be a vibrant place to reside."

"Praise to those who conceived and developed this strategy. It is a good example of what I love about Burnaby. I particularly admire the citizen input."

As the result of a truly "ground up" process and the commitment and foresight of a wide range of Burnaby citizens, Burnaby's Social Sustainability Strategy will help to ensure that all Burnaby residents have an opportunity to experience a sense of belonging, to maximize their personal potential, and to contribute to their community.