

Community Engagement Strategies used in *Sustainable Sackville*

Sustainable Sackville is a process that depends on community involvement, feedback and ongoing participation. For that reason, the process has included a significant amount of communications, cooperation, and discussions with members of the community at every stage. The following section outlines the strategies used, and highlights the results from each.

3.1 Community Engagement

Community Sustainability Survey¹

The survey was the first opportunity for community-participation in the *Sustainable Sackville* process. The survey, which included 24 questions related to perceptions of sustainability, was sent to each household within Town limits and was available through the Internet. Results concluded that the quality of life of the small, friendly Town was the favorite quality shared by respondents. The cultural strength of the community as well as the natural beauty of the surrounding area also figured prominently in responses. In terms of areas needing improvement, the most frequent response was the need for more restaurants and businesses in the downtown core. The majority of respondents identified a preference for more local, independent businesses, as opposed to large franchises or retail chains. Also of concern was the state of Town infrastructure and the lack of public transportation – both for within Town limits, as well as between Sackville and Amherst and/or Moncton for commuters. In summary, three common themes emerged from the survey results:

- The Municipality needs to lead the community by developing policy and regulations (and enforcing regulations), such as densification of downtown, idling policies, tax breaks to environmentally-friendly businesses (large and small), and stricter building standards for energy efficiency.
- Community members want to be provided with viable options in order to change their activities – more local food buying or growing opportunities are desired, more stores and services so community members don't have to leave Town, and public transportation alternatives to personal vehicles.
- Community Education is key to the success of any sustainability plan – to build support for the direction, and to show residents why it is so important to change our old ways of doing things. There is a cost both to action and inaction (economically, environmentally, and socially). Respondents suggested the following specific topics for education: garbage separation, supporting local businesses, renewable energy, and climate change.

Seven Wonders of Sackville:

The Seven Wonders were offered as a community challenge for residents to identify the part of Town (be it a building, place, or organization) that they felt deserved to be recognized as one of Sackville's "7 Wonders." The purpose of the campaign was to get people talking about what they loved about Sackville. Nominations were accepted from any member of the community and were posted publically. An on-line vote was held at the end of the campaign and, from the twelve nominations received, the top seven

¹ A full survey report and Executive summary can be found at www.sackville.com/community/sustainable_sackville/

vote-winners were: the Sackville Waterfowl Park; Mount Allison University; Tantramar Marshes; Mel's Tea Room; Wheaton's Covered Bridge; Silver Lake; and the MTA Swan Pond.

Earth Day Celebration:

On Thursday, April 22, a public screening of public service announcements (PSA) developed by Tantramar Regional High School (TRHS) students took place at Marshview Middle School (3 student sessions) and an evening session in the TRHS theatre. The presentations included screening the videos and an informal talk about the issues covered. The PSAs were followed by a presentation on the *Sustainable Sackville* initiative to date, including an overview of what other municipalities are doing (large and small) across North America.

Community Focus Groups:

Held throughout the community, focus group discussions centered on four key questions:

- 1) Why did you or your family come to Sackville? Why do you stay in Sackville?
- 2) When you think about the future, what concerns you?
- 3) Imagine you are 30 years in the future and you are telling your grandchildren why it's a great place to live. What do you tell them to prove it? What do you see in your vision?
- 4) As a member of this community, what do you think is your responsibility in achieving this vision?

More than 200 residents participated in these discussions. Participants involved in the focus groups include: non-profits; municipal staff; Tantramar High students; Salem Elementary School students; Marshview Middle School students; Parents of parent-tot group; family literacy day participants; informal social groups; Mount Allison geography classes; Mount Allison staff; Rotary Club; and business community members. Community members were also welcomed to attend a community breakfast with \$2 donations going to a local charity.

What the Community Said

The responses to the questions provided a great diversity of feedback, depending on the group taking part. Of particular interest were responses to question two (see below), in which respondents were asked to discuss their concerns for the future. Despite the growing amount of evidence supporting climate change and other environmental issues, the majority of initial responses were focused on economic and social welfare. This tells us that the Town still has a long way to go in educating the community on a range of issues relating to sustainability.

The table below summarizes community feedback to the four questions:

Discussion Question	Responses	Participant Quotes
1. Why did you come and/or why do you stay in Sackville?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was born here • I came for work • Safe place to raise a family or retire • Mount Allison’s international reputation • Small town feel • The arts, culture, and music • Family living • Amount of recreational activities and access to facilities • Centrality within the Maritimes • The natural beauty of the area. 	<p><i>“Sackville quickly became home for me and being any where else never seemed like a good idea. I had a small business and wanted to stay in Sackville and it was up to me to grow my business so I could stay (and now raise my family here.)”</i></p> <p><i>“Best of both worlds – small town with easy access to larger centres”</i></p>
2. When you think about the future, what concerns you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town may lose its individuality • Historical and cultural components of the Town may disappear • The income gap and poverty rate will continue to grow. • Independent stores and restaurants won’t be able to compete against larger companies. • Economic activity will shift to Moncton and Amherst • There may not be enough jobs created to attract young people to the area. • Age of the population will keep rising • The impact that climate change will have on the Town, especially the area which lies in the floodplain. • The quality of the dykes and whether they will be able to withstand stresses of rising sea levels. • Quality and value of food and safe drinking water will be lost • Decreases in the quality of the public education system • Wetland disappearance • Increasing levels of waste being created by our present way of life. • Decreasing supplies of nonrenewable resources • Disappearing family values 	<p><i>“Why are we not using the knowledge that many town residents hold?”</i></p> <p><i>“[The] town is not designing and planning a central, green gathering place.”</i></p> <p><i>“How far will we have to go to change destructive patterns?”</i></p> <p><i>“Will my generation have provided a healthy and sustainable enough world that my children will be able to live safely and comfortably?”</i></p>

<p>3. How do you picture Sackville as a sustainable community?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to Town infrastructure including more murals, green roofs, heritage preservation and trees and green space • An emphasis on the value of healthy living and strong family values. • Plenty of opportunities for residents to stay physically active in all seasons. • Town electricity is supplied only by renewable resources including solar, wind and tidal. • Mount Allison University and the Town collaborate and work together on significant initiatives • A permanent farmer’s market to promote local diets • Strong municipal leadership • A bilingual school system • Sufficient affordable housing • A public transportation service to the surrounding area. 	<p><i>“An influx of a talented young work force would help provide support for community fairs and activities, as well as support businesses such as restaurants and cafes.”</i></p> <p><i>“A lot of what gives Sackville its unique character is the past - how can we preserve that?”</i></p> <p><i>“Ideally, Sackville will develop into a healthy, green, and profitable town which provides equal opportunity for all”</i></p>
<p>What is your responsibility to make this future a reality?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop locally and eat healthy • Cook family meals for health, social and environmental reasons • Become more involved in the community by volunteering, voting, and participating in council meetings • Lead by example • Educated youth on the value of sustainability • Sort waste properly and think of ways to reduce personal waste • Exercise active transportation within Town (walk, bike) • Encourage physical activity with friends and family • Improve communication and engagement with the university community • Encourage collaboration to help the community’s non-profit organizations become sustainable • Drink municipal water rather than purchasing bottled water • Students should live in Sackville “as though they plan on staying” • Reduce, reuse, recycle • Monitor personal energy and water use 	<p><i>“We need a pragmatic plan that includes making the hard decisions and includes ongoing engagement.”</i></p> <p><i>“As residents of Sackville, it is our responsibility to be actively engaged in shaping a prosperous and healthy future for our town”</i></p> <p><i>“It is not good enough to simply demand change from our governments. We all must integrate ourselves within this town if we wish to see it thrive.”</i></p>