Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – February 11, 2009

REPORTS

Minute No. 136 Capital Region Vision Framework
eFile EP-1.5

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee recommends to Council:

1. That the City of Winnipeg endorse in principle the Regional Vision Framework dated December 8, 2008 to be a guide to assist review of all land development policies and as an initial step toward greater inter-municipal coordination and cooperation.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Steeves,

WHEREAS the Partnership of the Manitoba Capital Region, formerly known as the Mayors and Reeves of the Capital Region, includes representation from fifteen of the local government authorities within the area defined as the Capital Region;

AND WHEREAS the Partnership has conducted public and stakeholder consultations on long range development and cooperation within the Capital Region;

AND WHEREAS in the interests of a more liveable and sustainable region, the Partnership has prepared a Regional Vision Framework describing broad recommendations for the Environment, Land Use, Connecting the Region and Regional Cooperation;

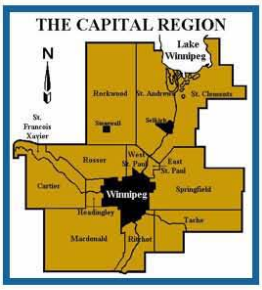
AND WHEREAS this Regional Vision Framework represents the first initiative by and for the municipalities of the Capital Region to foster a collaborative, cooperative and sustainable regional view of the future;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council endorse in principle the Regional Vision Framework dated December 8, 2008 to be a guide to assist review of all land development policies and as an initial step toward greater inter-municipal coordination and cooperation.

Carried

more than common geography

The Mayors and Reeves of Manitoba's Capital Region represent the 15 municipalities at the Province's population and economic centre. With support from the Province of Manitoba and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Mayors and Reeves of the Capital Region, Inc. have engaged the region's municipal leaders, community stakeholders and the public in six workshops during January and June of 2008. Using software designed specifically for this region, called CapitalRegionQuest, these workshops explored scenarios for a more desirable and sustainable future. In addition, in April of 2008, municipal and other officials gathered at a conference called "Learning to Think and Act Like a Region", exploring greater regional coordination and cooperation.



This Regional Vision Framework takes the next step, by describing the results of these recent discussions, outlining priorities for a sustainable region under four important areas, and discussing actions to address these priorities.

If current trends in the Capital Region continue . . .

There will be more of us

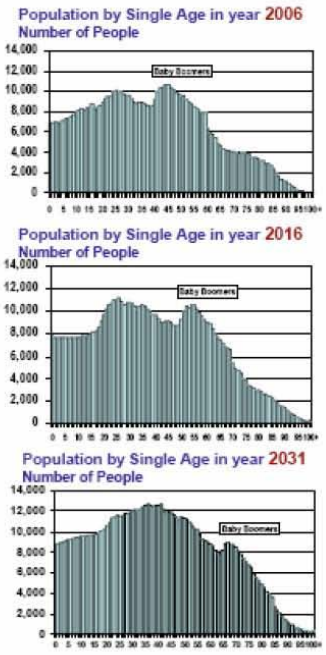
The Conference Board of Canada projects that by 2031 the Capital Region will grow to 934, 400 people (from 706,700 in 2006). This means finding land to accommodate 227,700 more people or about 93,000 households.

We will be an older population

The portion of the population at retirement age (60+) will increase from 14% to 20% and the younger population (under 25) will drop from 39% to 30%.

We will use a lot more land

We have tended to be heavy consumers of land. Today most new households in the Capital Region are opting for single family detached homes (71% of housing starts in 2006 – 93% outside Winnipeg) and many of these are on large lots. Although the balance is shifting, the majority of starts to 2031 (about 55%) will continue to be for single family households.



CURRENT TRENDS

We will continue to lose prime agricultural land

Much of the Capital Region (about 65%) is prime land for agricultural production and about 15% of Manitoba's agricultural production takes place in the region. Our lower density style of development will need to occupy a lot of this prime agricultural land.

We will need more roads, sewers and water

Our low density development will require us to build and maintain more roads, sewer, water and drainage, to say nothing of renewing existing aging infrastructure.

We will spend a lot more time driving

We are a car-dependant culture and more people spread over more land and connected by a growing road system will mean more time spent going to work, shopping and recreation.

We will continue to damage our environment

We may hope that technological advances will balance the increased fuel consumption needed to heat more single family homes and move more vehicles greater distances, but at current trends our growing region is likely to produce a lot more greenhouse gases.



Satellite image of a blue-green algal bloom in the north basin.



In the conversations heard at CapitalRegionQuest Workshops the community told the story of a desirable and sustainable future region that today's residents would prefer to pass on to the next generation.

In a desirable and sustainable future Capital Region . . .

Our environment is being protected

"Abundant green energy", "green environment", "green environmental leadership", "protected aquifers and surface water", "healthy environment" and "environmental innovation" were among the phrases used to describe the future region. "The environment" is a key issue in all development decision making.

Communities are more compact with mixed land uses

The shape of our communities and their urban character was described in phrases like "denser and more walkable communities", "mixed land uses", "residential diversity" and "emphasis on neighbourhoods and settlement centres". Mixing uses allows greater opportunity to work and shop closer to home and more compact development opens opportunities for alternative transportation and other sustainable benefits.

People can expect clean, reliable water and sewer services

"Clean water", "good water", "good sewers" were some of the phrases used during all workshops to describe this top priority.

"Hard" services, like roads, sewer and water, are used more efficiently

Talk of "managed growth", "sustainable communities" and "planned / managed development" expressed the need for more efficiency in how we use some of our most costly services.

Communities are connected and accessible

Transportation services that connect communities and neighbourhoods, whether by road, public transit or alternative types of transportation, are part of the region's future. "Multi-modal transportation corridors", "regional transit", "mass transit", "bike paths", "park and ride", "walkability" and "traffic that moves" were among the phrases used to describe a region of easy, efficient connection.

Prime agricultural land is preserved

Phrases like "protect agriculture" and "diversity of agriculture" described the value of agriculture in a sustainable future region.

Communities have that "liveability" factor

This broad sentiment was captured in descriptions of a region that has "safe communities", "conviviality", "sense of community" and is "seniors friendly".

Green space and natural areas are protected

People talked about having "green spaces and trails" and "protect green spaces" and recognized the value of accessible green and natural areas.

People think in terms of a regional economy on a national and international stage

Workshops talked about the region's economy with phrases like "shared economic development", "economic viability", "assertive economic development", "many economic hubs", "meaningful and accessible employment" and "selling/ marketing the region globally".

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

This framework introduces a regional perspective on development and sets priorities in four important areas:

THE ENVIRONMENT

Our future is being increasingly defined in environmental terms and in particular, the quality of the environment being left to future generations. As we become aware of how past decisions and present lifestyles impact the future quality of our environment, and the connection between individual, regional and global decisions, a basic set of environmental goals becomes an important tool for decision making.

LAND USE

The way we use land and the shape of our communities determines how efficiently they can be serviced, the impact they have on the environment and the quality of life of residents. Decisions by individual communities sometimes have regional implications and should be guided by broad and long range views about the way the region's communities inter-relate.

CONNECTING THE REGION

The Capital Region's many communities and growing population must be connected so that people can easily move within and between communities for work, leisure and services. Development decisions should seek effective connections that minimize costs due to pavement, pollution and wasted time.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

The Capital Region is the population centre and the economic engine of the Province. The strength, efficiency and sustainability of the region will depend on the ability of local government to find advantage in cooperative coordinated decision making.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Close to home, Capital Region residents measure the quality of their environment in terms of safe drinking water, clean rivers, streams and lakes, vigorous natural areas, managed drainage, and clean air. On a broader stage it is measured by our impacts of global warming. All of these environmental concerns need to be addressed through intentional environmental strategies.

Keep our waterways clean: *We have a regional responsibility to protect the quality of water in Lake Winnipeg, the rivers and streams that drain the Region and the groundwater, all of which are valuable for drinking water, recreation and natural habitat.*

Ensure safe drinking water: *Clean, safe and reliable drinking water should be available to every resident of the Capital Region.*

Manage drainage: *Drainage from farmland and urban environments should not burden adjacent municipalities or negatively impact our rivers and streams or Lake Winnipeg.*

Protect natural areas: *Treed areas, natural prairie, river and stream edges and wetlands shelter the plants, animals and insects that connect us with nature. These natural areas should be identified and protected.*

Reduce global warming: *Local decisions have a direct and indirect impact on the region's ecological footprint. Decisions about new development, alternate transportation options and the way we use our settlement areas can have a long term positive impact on global warming*

Adopt local environmental strategies: *When "the environment" is an intentional perspective in local decision making there can be positive short and long term benefits for the quality of the Capital Region's environment. Every local plan should address local and regional environmental issues.*

Measuring Success

- There is continuing improvement to the quality of all the Region's water bodies.
- There are formal or informal understandings between municipalities concerning inter-municipal drains.
- Municipal plans have specific policies on protection of ground water.
- All new development is connected to a municipal water system
- There is a reduction in the number of households relying on groundwater.
- There are more agreements for the sharing and development of municipal water and sewage treatment services.
- Government cost/benefit analysis of any new development has been expanded to include more environmental factors.
- All local authority has a comprehensive environmental strategy focussed on sustainability.

Acting on the Environment

- Facilitate continuing inter-municipal discussions on shared sewer and water services.
- Develop models for inter-municipal servicing agreements including process, form, management and dispute resolution.
- Research benchmarks for environmental issues like surface water quality, air quality, recycling, water use, waste management and others that may form the basis for future development management targets.
- Provide a sustainable rationale for development policies that permit new residential development that is not fully serviced.
- Critically review current local environmental policy and develop models for basic municipal environmental management.
- Map the natural areas of the region and define their value.

LAND USE

The use of land and the urban form that develops to accommodate population growth will directly impact the efficiency of services, the ecological footprint and the quality of life of residents in the Capital Region.

Use existing community nodes: *The Capital Region's existing serviced communities and neighbourhoods can accommodate all anticipated new growth. Capital Region communities should expect a full range of services, such as high quality municipal water, municipally managed waste treatment and recycling, which support a healthy and sustainable urban environment.*

Increase density: *More compact development, including infill and increased densities, will preserve agricultural land, create more efficient use of municipal services, reduce travel time, make alternative methods of transportation more viable and reduce greenhouse gas production.*

Mix land use: *Greater integration of where people live, where they work and where they shop will reduce travel time, energy use and greenhouse gas production and can encourage alternative and more active means of transportation (bus, bike, walking, etc.)*

Measuring Success
Land Use

- There is a reduction in the ratio of land per population.
- High quality municipal water and sewer services are available for all new development.
- There are fewer households without a full range of municipal services.
- More people are served per mile of infrastructure (greater efficiency).
- Average travel times and distances are decreasing.
- There is increasing use of alternative transportation methods like walking, cycling and public transit

Acting on Land Use:

- Develop a fundamental understanding of settlement and land use in the Capital Region in order to establish an understanding of the region in areas such as: population density, intensity/efficiency of infrastructure use, mixed land uses, travel distances, amount and quality of agricultural land, services in existing population nodes and other issues related to land use and urban form.
- Begin to define long range regional targets for the issue of land use and urban form.
- Explore best practices for sustainable development in other urban centres.
- All municipalities should engage their regional partners in the review and update of local development plans in a spirit of mutual accountability and respect.

PRIORITY #2—LAND USE

CONNECTING THE REGION

How people move around the region directly impacts congestion, land consumption, commute time and greenhouse gas production. Shifting the balance of mobility toward more public transit and transportation alternatives can slow the growth of traffic congestion and increase mobility.

Shift the Balance of Mobility: *Public transit can provide an essential, efficient and effective connection within and between communities and neighbourhoods of the Capital Region. Alternative transportation options like public transit, car pooling, cycling and walking can benefit the region through healthier life-style choices, reducing traffic congestion and improved air quality. Alternative transportation options should be part of the long term cost/benefit analysis for any new development or neighbourhood redevelopment.*

Measuring Success: Connecting the Region

- There is an expanding public transit system throughout the region connecting nodes of population.
- More people are choosing alternative options.
- There is less use of single occupant private vehicles.

Acting on Connecting the Region

- Research current transportation modes and travel distances as a background for land development and transportation policies aimed at reducing time and distance for personal travel.
- Assess and promote the feasibility of public transit services connecting Capital Region population nodes.
- Research potential regional transportation targets such as: expanding public transit availability and ridership; reduction of individual travel time/distance; miles of dedicated bicycle commute routes; car pooling; park and ride services.
- Develop models for more comprehensive cost benefit analysis for sustainable transportation in new development.

REGIONAL COOPERATION

Developing a regional perspective will require that decision makers and the public have reliable information about Capital Region issues and a willingness and opportunity to engage in dialogue about alternative futures. It will also require exploring opportunities (e.g. park maintenance, libraries, public transit, sewer and water, roads and emergency services) and developing tools (e.g. inter-municipal servicing agreements) that support coordinated action on regional services and concerns.

Understand the region: ***Inter-municipal and Provincial cooperation to build and maintain a base of regional information, keep it current and make it accessible to decisions makers and the public, will encourage a broader and more realistic understanding of the region and the government and individual decisions that will impact its sustainability.***

Support communication and consultation: ***A public that is informed on issues and engaged in imagining a more sustainable future is essential to defining and acting upon a more liveable and sustainable Capital Region.***

Encourage Inter-municipal Agreements: ***Develop models and processes for inter-municipal cooperation and agreement of infrastructure and service sharing.***

Apply a regional and sustainable perspective: ***As municipalities update development plans and budget to renew, replace or expand infrastructure and services, all should look beyond municipal boundaries to incorporate a regional perspective.***

Work with Provincial and Federal Governments: ***The Governments of Manitoba and Canada have responsibilities and resources with respect to the environment, transportation and other issues impacted by local decision making. They are partners in the efficient and effective delivery of initiatives to support sustainability.***

PRIORITY #4—REGIONAL COOPERATION

Measuring Success: Regional Cooperation

- The internet is being used as an effective tool to inform the public on regional issues and opportunities.
- New methods of engaging the public in discussions about regional sustainability, such as CapitalRegionQuest, have been developed.
- Negotiation processes for inter-municipal agreements have been developed and adopted.
- Model agreements have been prepared and local examples are recognized.
- Dispute resolution processes have been agreed upon.

Acting on Regional Cooperation

- Invest in an effective, engaging, accessible Capital Region internet site where information about the region is shared and public discussion is supported.
- Develop a relationship with the Universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba to support innovative research to expand understanding of Capital Region issues.
- Develop "best practices" resources on sustainable municipal policy, programs, infrastructure, regulation, and other issues by which local government guides the future.
- Develop resources to facilitate inter-municipal negotiation on infrastructure and service sharing, prepare models for such agreements and offer dispute resolution support.

IMPLEMENTING THE REGIONAL VISION FRAMEWORK

This Framework for regional cooperation begins with a belief that the Manitoba's capital region will be more successful and it will offer a better future for its residents if we think and act like a region rather than as a collection of individual communities that happen to share a common geography.

It is a long range vision. It dreams of a desirable and sustainable Capital Region and offers broad goals and actions to support this dream. But it relies on the policies and development decisions of each municipality and planning district to move the vision forward.

It is a vision that will evolve. It establishes basic directions that will gain clarity and context as Capital Region communities respond to this framework in their own planning processes. It will move toward a clearer description of how individual municipalities can make local development decision that support regional cooperation and sustainability.

Municipal Endorsement

This Framework is not intended to be comprehensive or authoritative. It establishes development goals to help local authorities think and act from a more regional and sustainable perspective. It requires the acknowledgement of local Councils that these goals will be part of their decision making process.

Regular Review

These goals are intended to evolve as the municipalities of the Capital Region become more aware of their common interests and of the implications of their decision making on the long term sustainability of the Region.

Monitor and Evaluate

As well as continually reviewing and refining the goals of this Framework, member municipalities must also refine and monitor the measures by which success will be evaluated.

Regional Strategy

Capital Region municipalities will move toward the adoption of a strategy that will define clear areas of common interest for achieving a liveable and sustainable region. In this plan they will agree to the policies they will pursue to further these common interests.

SHORT TERM ACTION FOR A LONG TERM VISION

This is a long term vision for a more sustainable Capital Region. Ultimately any long term vision must lead to action by those with a stake in the future. Next step actions by the Mayors and Reeves of the Capital Region and by the municipalities and planning districts, with support from the Province, might take the following form:

THE 2 YEAR HORIZON:

Build Relationships: In collaboration with the Capital Region municipalities and the Province, clearly define roles and build relationships and trust toward addressing Capital Region **issues.**

Prepare a strategic plan: Prepare a strategic plan confirming regional relationships and clearly describing areas of priority action over the next 5 to 10 years.

Facilitate Collaboration/Cooperation: Support inter-municipal cooperation on infrastructure and services by developing models for agreements including the negotiation process, the form of such agreements, **management and dispute resolution.**

Promote Informed Debate: Identify and undertake research to support inter-municipal and public discourse on Capital Region issues (e.g. baseline data on infrastructure services and quality, urban density, surface water quality, mobility, natural areas, etc.). Develop collaborative partnerships with organizations like universities, chambers of commerce, environmental and community interest groups and professional organizations that will foster effective information gathering and distribution and informed discussion.

Review this Vision Framework: As regional relationships are clarified and support resources are developed, revisit and renew the goals, measures and actions of this Framework.

Report to the community: Regularly provide a "report card" on progress in regional cooperation toward a more sustainable future.

THE 5 YEAR HORIZON:

Define Long Range Regional Targets: Define long range targets for a desirable and sustainable future such as targets related to efficient use of land and services, quality of surface water, public transit and alternative/active transportation and frame these targets to support local decision making.

Adopt a Sustainable Development Plan: Adopt a Capital Region Sustainable Development Plan dealing with land use, servicing and transportation issues that have a regional or inter-municipal focus and support sustainable development principles and guidelines.

Develop Planning Tools: Facilitate the development of local government planning tools (e.g. methods for municipalities to expand the cost/benefit analysis of new development proposals to include a broader range of environmental and sustainability issues) that support sustainable development decision making.

Support Local Plan Review: Develop mechanisms and resources for active, constructive regional participation in local development plan review. (i.e. Plan Winnipeg; and capital region development plans)