Resource Conservation Manitoba

A Non-Profit Centre for Applied Sustainability

From Vision to Action: The Path to a Sustainable Winnipeg

Comments from Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM) on

***OurWinnipeg* and companion reports**

July 14, 2010

Introduction

Resource Conservation Manitoba (RCM) commends the City of Winnipeg and the Speak Up Winnipeg team for a groundbreaking consultation process to collect and synthesize input from over 40,000 Winnipeggers plus experts on the kind of Winnipeg we want for ourselves and our posterity. As a non-profit, non-governmental Centre for Applied Sustainability, we are heartened that the planning exercise put a sustainable Winnipeg at the core of our collective vision and attempted to draw the implications of that commitment for the different elements of the plan. To move from the vision of the plan to the many actions in all sectors required to fulfill it demands a strong commitment by City Council, the public service and the citizens of Winnipeg. We must all do our part, but officers of the City have a special obligation.

We understand that the new plan for Winnipeg consists, at this point, of the five documents released just over a month ago: *OurWinnipeg*, *Complete Communities*, *Sustainable Transportation*, *Sustainable Water and Waste,* and *A Sustainable Winnipeg*. We also understand that the first two of these, *Our Winnipeg* and *Complete Communities*, are recommended to become city by-laws, whereas the remaining three are recommended to be adopted in principal as policy. We further understand that the four direction strategies are intended to provide more detailed policies, directions and strategies for the Our Winnipeg plan. There is thus substantial overlap between documents.

The consultation report says an introduction to the draft documents occurred from February to June, 2010. This is not the case. RCM tried on several occasions to obtain draft documents for comment but we were declined until their release at the end of May immediately prior to the final roundtables when comments were solicited. This is our first opportunity for considered comment on the draft plans. The documents are all marked DRAFT. We trust this means that the hearing process and the further deliberations of EPC and Council are genuinely open to the entertainment of constructive amendments.

Our remarks will touch on the following points drawn from the documents referred to collectively as "the plan":

1. We selectively highlight some of the many strengths of the plan.
2. We identify areas where improvement is needed.
3. We propose four needed amendments.

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1. The plan has numerous strengths

OurWinnipeg

- Recognizes that a city that works, with a high quality of life, needs sustainability at the core
- Acknowledges that vision must be linked to action and that citizens are disenchanted when plans aren't followed through
- Commits the City to being a leader and role model
- Commits to relationship building and partnerships with community organizations and others
- Prescribes the completion of an OurWinnipeg Action Plan with directions for implementation and sustainability indicators
- Provides direction to pursue opportunities to support local food production
- Includes the need for GHG reductions and climate change action

Complete Communities

- Based on concept where residents can live, work, play, shop, and learn in the same neighbourhood, as well as age in place
- Links land use directly to transportation
- Includes an innovative analysis of urban structure
- Encourages mixed use and increased density
- Includes consideration of a Complete Streets policy to make roads safe, convenient and accessible to all types, ages and abilities of users (bus riders, cyclists, pedestrians, motorists, commercial drivers)
- Recognizes need for context-sensitive and climate-sensitive (winter city) design
- Increases emphasis on transit/rapid transit, pedestrians and cyclists
- Plans for and promotes transit-oriented developments
- Makes multiple references to Transportation Demand Management (TDM)
- Identifies a range of policies and tools needed for implementation

Sustainable Transportation

- Recognizes need to include policies and programs that help change behaviour
- Notes possibility of creating a Winnipeg Transportation Authority
- Supports active, healthy, accessible lifestyle and transportation options
- Commits to a Transportation Master Plan
- Looks to integrated regional transit and active transportation planning

Sustainable Water and Waste

- Heavy investment for health and environment in water and wastewater facilities
- Water conservation and water sensitive urban design initiatives
- Cost of service and rate structure study for water and wastewater permits introduction of economic incentives at the consumer level

- Investing for the long run, Strategic Asset Management
- Recognizes need to prepare a comprehensive Waste Management Strategy
- Defines waste diversion as diverting waste away from both landfills or incinerators to recycling, composting or reuse
- Recognizes need for a Source Separated Organics program and outlines effective ways to develop and carry out this strategy

Sustainable Winnipeg

- Piecemeal approaches won't work; a cultural shift towards integrated planning with multiple dimensions of sustainability is needed
- Recognizes the importance of tracking performance with indicators and the need for targets, e.g. creating a Climate Change Action Plan that will achieve Winnipeg's share in meeting the province's legislated Kyoto target of 6% GHG reduction below 1990 levels and setting community-wide GHG reduction targets for 2020 and 2035
- Recognizes that, if we are not just to be tracking a series of failures after the fact, we must integrate sustainability criteria into planning and project approvals and create and use sustainability tools.
- Winnipeg must engage its citizens and partners, and exercise leadership for effective planning and action
- A healthy economy requires a healthy society living in a healthy environment. We must respect and value the natural and built environment and plan to maintain these. We must be mindful of our ecological footprint and how to reduce it individually and collectively.

2. The plan needs some improvements

Needs expanding

OurWinnipeg

- While the plan addresses the need to accommodate older residents, recognition of and emphasis on accommodating the special needs of children and youth also needs to be included. Doing so will, in turn, often accommodate residents of all ages. Guidance on how to do so can be found in the Child- and Youth-Friendly Land-Use and Transportation Planning Guidelines (www.centreforsustainabletransportation.org/documents/GuidelinesforManitoba3.pdf and www.kidsonthemove.ca/).
- Reference should be made to other relevant provincial legislation: *The Sustainable Development Act* and *The Climate Change and Emissions Reductions Act*

Sustainable Transportation

- Needs to include language that starts discussion of transitioning from being simply a city with transit to a "transit city" as described by G.B. Arrington, the consultant who helped develop the City's TOD

handbook. In a "transit city" it is just as easy to take a bus to see a movie on a Friday night or go shopping on Sunday afternoon as it is to get to and from work during the peak commuting hours.

- Needs provincial context: ***Beyond Kyoto*** www.gov.mb.ca/beyond_kyoto/index.html, p.23:

  Transportation activities, including road, rail, marine, air and off-road vehicles, are Manitoba's largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. They account for approximately 37 per cent of Manitoba's total emissions. Environment Canada reports that in 2005, Manitoba's road transportation emissions were 18.6 per cent above 1990 levels.
- Needs to recognize transportation as the largest GHG sector and greatest opportunity for reduction
- Needs greener approaches for funding transportation infrastructure (e.g. why should homeowners rather than vehicle owners pay the costs of maintaining city streets? Why not shift the proportion of property tax spent on street work to vehicles?)

Sustainable Water and Waste

- Development of a Comprehensive Waste Management Strategy must include targets and timelines
- Discusses alternatives for sustainable financing, but no mention of a user pay or pay as you throw system, which needs to be in place for any movement towards waste reduction
- More focus needs to be given to public education and awareness
- Instead of viewing Brady as a place to dump stuff (and noting we have 100 years capacity for that function), why not view it as an economic development zone with daily delivery of resources for exploitation as urban ore and energy? Classify it as "employment lands."

Items of concern

General comments regarding all documents:

- The language is often intentionally vague leaving the important ideas at risk of being easily ignored due to the "escape clause". See examples underlined below.
  - Complete Communities Principle #3: **"**OurWinnipeg supports a pedestrian and transit friendly environment by integrating public infrastructure, land uses and built form to encourage higher residential densities and building-type variation, where practical and feasible."
  - "Complete Communities provide options for mobility by facilitating a range of transportation options. In many instances, modes of transportation will differ from one part of the city to another based on the area's context. Alternative modes of transportation should be encouraged where they can provide convenient and realistic travel choices."
- Pushes off to the future critical elements for implementation, including major secondary plans and the setting of and delivering on targets with deadlines
- Needs to reference green fiscal measures throughout as strategic tools to reward sustainable choices in transportation, waste reduction, water conservation, energy efficiency, land use policies and planning

Sustainable Transportation

- Development of the Transportation Master Plan "after the fact" is a concern for several reasons, mainly because it makes it difficult to respond to the Sustainable Transportation direction strategy; we were told that any concerns will be addressed during development of the master plan, such as the selected indicators for "measuring success"
- Generally speaking, there appears to be a lack of willingness to actively pursue strategies that purposely shift modes from driving alone to sustainable options, such as transit, carpooling, walking or cycling (or combinations thereof). Instead, the plan focuses on providing "a range of" transportation options and continuing to build roadways to accommodate driving.
- Discussion of the Transportation Master Plan model on p. 4 makes no mention of modelling emissions from different planning choices. Emissions indicators are all associated with active transportation (p. 42), as though cyclists and pedestrians alone bear the burden for the City's emissions reduction. This ignores the multiple opportunities for GHG reduction and various TDM strategies.
- There is no strategic goal (pp. 6-7) that addresses the fact that 37% of Manitoba's GHGs originate from transportation
- There appears to be a lack of recognition of the role of multi-modal (e.g. transit and walking/cycling) options for travelling longer distances within the city, and an assumption that driving is the only answer in some areas
- The wording "Accommodate all modes and reduce both delay and emissions by investing in selected capacity improvements to existing major street network operations" appears to indicate that increasing vehicle capacity by expanding roads will reduce emissions, rather than addressing alternatives. RCM notes there is evidence that road capacity expansion can actually induce increased traffic and result in higher GHG emissions (www.vtpi.org/cong_relief.pdf).

Complete Communities:

- The non-regulatory nature of Complete Communities Checklist could simply be ignored

3. RCM proposes four amendments to address deficiencies

In this brief we identify several specific points that need to be reflected in an amended plan. Because the plan's themes appear in several places, the public service should assist in incorporating and editing the needed revisions.

A. Amendments for Child- and Youth-Friendly Land-Use and Transportation Planning

The documents need to make explicit concepts and resources for Child- and Youth-Friendly Land-Use and Transportation Planning as essential tools for ensuring quality of life in Winnipeg (see references above). In particular, Direction 8 on p. 78 of *OurWinnipeg* should be amended to read:

*"Include **child- and youth-friendliness and** age-friendliness in City of Winnipeg Strategic Planning."*

Notes:

i. Direction 9 and the bullets beneath 8 and 9 will need editing to reflect this change.
ii. ***Bolded and underlined text*** is our proposed addition.

B. Amendments to establish the provincial context for sustainability planning

The documents need to make explicit the provincial planning and legislation that have already occurred around sustainable development and climate change and in particular the fact that *"The initial emissions reduction target for Manitoba is to reduce Manitoba's emissions by December 31, 2012, to an amount that is at least 6% less than Manitoba's total 1990 emissions"* (3(1) of The Climate Change and Emissions Reduction Act (2008)). This can be quoted or paraphrased in the Introduction to *OurWinnipeg* and in the discussion of climate change on p. 15 of *Sustainable Winnipeg*. Possible wording for the Introduction:

> *Manitoba's Sustainable Development Act (1997) and Climate Change and Emissions Reduction Act (2008) define provincial sustainability goals and guidelines. Winnipeg, with 55% of the provincial population (and growing) and corresponding capacity and opportunities for innovation, is a linchpin for achieving a sustainable Manitoba.*

C. Amendments to the *Sustainable Transportation* Direction Strategy

Sustainable Transportation needs to frame the challenge of emission reductions in the transportation sector by including the following facts from *Beyond Kyoto* (2008) in the Introduction.

> *Transportation activities, including road, rail, marine, air and off-road vehicles, are Manitoba's largest source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. They account for approximately 37 per cent of Manitoba's total emissions. Environment Canada reports that in 2005, Manitoba's road transportation emissions were 18.6 per cent above 1990 levels.*

Sustainable Transportation needs to direct that the Transportation Master Plan model (p. 4) shall be able to assess and compare the GHG implications of different transportation and land-use choices.

Sustainable Transportation needs to add as an explicit strategic goal (pp. 6-7):

> *A transportation system that reduces its GHG emissions footprint and meets or surpasses climate change and emissions reduction goals set by the City and the Province.*

D. Amendments to bullets under Policy 1 on p. 51 in *Sustainable Water and Waste*

- *Prepare a comprehensive Waste Management Strategy* ***that establishes meaningful waste diversion targets and timelines for reaching these targets.***
- *Evaluate alternatives for sustainable system financing*
- ***Evaluate alternatives for securing higher participation rates by households and businesses, including education, social marketing, pay-a- you-waste rates and regulation***
- ***Evaluate alternatives for local economic development linked to resource recovery.***