

Town of Cobourg Integrated Community Sustainability Plan

Phase Two What We Heard Report

July 8, 2022

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
1.0 Introduction	3
1.1 Planning Process	3
1.2 Public Engagement Objective	4
2.0 Process and Participation	4
2.1 How We Engaged	4
Public Questionnaire	5
Stakeholder Questionnaire	5
Youth Survey	5
Workshops	5
Website	6
2.2 Engagement Communication	6
2.3 Who We Heard From	6
3.0 What We Heard	7
3.1 Online Questionnaires	7
3.1.1 Public Questionnaire	7
3.1.2 Youth Questionnaire	11
3.1.3 Stakeholder Questionnaire	15
3.2 Workshops	16
Built Environment	16
Natural Environment	17
Economy	17
Society and Culture	18
Governance	18
4.0 Next Steps	20

Executive Summary

Phase two of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) engagement process, focused on the plan vision and goals, has now been completed. The following report highlights what key stakeholders, the public, and youth said in response to prompting questions about the vision and objectives for the ICSP. Using a variety of engagement approaches, feedback was obtained across the plan's dimensions of sustainability – the built environment, social and cultural, economic, natural environment and governance. This feedback will inform the vision and goals for the final ICSP.

1.0 Introduction

In December 2019, Cobourg's Town Council passed a resolution to declare a climate emergency and accelerate a transition towards carbon neutrality within Cobourg in response to the unprecedented global climate crisis. This resolution follows Council's 2019 - 2022 Strategic Plan, which aims to position the Town as both an environmental steward and model sustainable community, and prior sustainability work done in the 2010 and 2020 Climate Action Plan processes.

In response, an **Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP)** is in preparation to help realize the aims of the climate emergency resolution and preceding plans. The Plan will comprise specific and achievable actions that both the community and municipal government of Cobourg will take to build on existing environmental progress and advance new measures to respond to the climate emergency.

Alongside the strategic direction provided by the ICSP, the Town is also leading two concurrent projects to prepare **Green Development Standards (GDS)** and complete a **Green Energy Retrofit (GER)** Feasibility Study. The GDS will explore how the urban development process can support environmentally sustainable outcomes that can include, but are not limited to, energy efficiency and management, active transportation, stormwater management, water conservation, and solar readiness. Meanwhile, the GER will evaluate the potential opportunities, resources, and tools available to retrofit multi-family residential buildings with energy-efficient and renewable energy systems with the ultimate goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from residential sources.

The ICSP / GDS / GER project will be informed by a number of different inputs, including the sustainability context of Cobourg, established standards and lessons learned from other communities in Ontario, municipal and regional priorities, and stakeholder feedback.

1.1 Planning Process

The combined ICSP/GDS/GER planning process launched in January 2022, and is anticipated to continue through the end of the year. Phase one of the ICSP engagement, which ran from February to March 2022, sought to understand the current state of sustainability in Cobourg. A summary of the engagement process, including the themes that emerged from feedback, is

included in the ICSP document library at engagecobourg.ca/integrated-community-sustainability-plan.

The second phase of engagement sought to inform the creation of a vision and set of objectives for a sustainable Cobourg.

1.2 Public Engagement Objective

The public engagement objective for phase two of the engagement process was to:

- Communicate the aims of the ICSP and its purpose, and the opportunities to participate both within phase two and the project's planning process at large
- Collaboratively develop a vision and set of objectives for sustainability in Cobourg through community feedback
- Inform subsequent phases of engagement and planning within the ICSP / GDS / GER project.

2.0 Process and Participation

From April 28, 2022 to June 8, 2022, an engagement process was implemented to ensure stakeholders and community members could share their insights and feedback on vision and objectives, as part of the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan. Throughout the course of Phase 2 of the project, we heard from 72 community participants.

Participants were invited to consider the different dimensions of sustainability, from environmental to economic, and to provide feedback as to their lived experience of sustainability, their vision for how sustainability is attended to and supported in Cobourg, and what key goals the ICSP should contain.

The project team solicited feedback from community groups, subject matter experts, Cobourg's youth and residents from all walks of life to understand their ideas and experiences with sustainability locally. The enthusiasm for and commitment to sustainability shown by participants is reflected in the depth of feedback offered through the phase.

2.1 How We Engaged

To share questions, comments and insights, people were encouraged to:

- Attend one of the five Zoom workshop sessions held from May 11 to May 26, 2022, and to
- Provide feedback using an online public questionnaire, from April 28 to June 7.

In addition, stakeholders including committee representatives, youth, non-profit groups, and industry professionals were invited to share their feedback via tailored questionnaires for the duration of the engagement period.

Public Questionnaire

The online questionnaire provided participants the opportunity to share feedback and insights on a series of prompting questions about the vision and goals for the ICSP at their own convenience. Participants were asked to share their broad vision for sustainability in Cobourg before translating their feedback into detailed goals pertaining to each dimension of sustainability: built and natural environments, economy, society and culture, and governance.

Stakeholder Questionnaire

An extended questionnaire was also prepared and distributed to a number of volunteer, committee, industry, conservation authority, and nonprofit stakeholders. The questionnaire contained the same questions as those in the online public questionnaire, but also sought to understand the current organizational constraints to sustainable action and how the ICSP could support organizational goals.

Youth Survey

As with the stakeholder questionnaire, students from a local secondary school were presented with an extended questionnaire. They too were invited to share their feedback on the vision and goals for sustainability, but also to speak to the lived experience of being a young person in Cobourg and how the ICSP might reflect their own perspectives on sustainability.

Between April 28 and June 7, 2022, the questionnaires received a combined 62 responses.

Workshops

A series of five one-and-a-half-hour long virtual workshops were held during the phase two engagement process in May 2022. Each workshop prompted participants to consider the vision and goals for the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan through each dimension of sustainability: natural environment, built environment, economy, culture and society, and governance. The aim was to prompt participants to think beyond (but including) the environmental dimensions of sustainability to consider the multiple ways a more sustainable Cobourg may be realized.

The workshop series was designed with feedback from the first phase in mind; there would be more workshop offerings to allow participants the opportunity to choose a time most suitable to their schedule. Additionally, it was hoped the increased number of workshops in phase two would support smaller group discussions that were less dependent on engagement tools for facilitation. Workshop capacity for each was set to 18 attendees, for a potential total of 90 participants across all workshops.

The workshops were lightly attended by participants and largely conversational in nature; though attendance numbers were low, the resulting discussions were informative and deeply rooted in the experience of the participating Cobourgians.

The dates of each workshop and corresponding attendee counts are presented below.

Date	Attendee Count
Wednesday, May 11, 2022	1
Wednesday, May 18, 2022	1
Thursday, May 19, 2022	1
Wednesday, May 25, 2022	2
Thursday, May 26, 2022	5
Total	10

Website

The ICSP project page, located on the Town's Bang The Table platform, shared updates about the process and provided opportunities to connect into the process. During the phase two engagement process, the project page received 103 visits from prospective participants.

2.2 Engagement Communication

Engagement opportunities were communicated using the following:

- A public notice was issued to local media outlets on April 29, 2022
- Ads were published in the Thursday edition of Northumberland News for a period of four weeks during the engagement phase
- The ICSP project page on the Town's Bang The Table platform
- Email prompts were sent to 33 registered residents on Bang the Table on April 29
- Two social media posts on the Town's Facebook and Twitter accounts
- Weekly social media ads posted on the Town's Facebook and Twitter accounts

2.3 Who We Heard From

The engagement process garnered feedback from 72 participants, and communicated updates on the ICSP to 103 visitors to the project page, with some overlap between participants and visitors. The number of responses or points of contact and conversation are detailed below:

- **Online Questionnaire:** 33 responses
- **Workshops:** 10 participants
- **Website:** 103 visitors
- **Stakeholder Questionnaire:** 7 responses
- **Youth Questionnaire:** 22 responses

3.0 What We Heard

The following section shares the questions that were asked as part of the community engagement process paired with what was heard from participants in response to these prompts.

3.1 Online Questionnaires

3.1.1 Public Questionnaire

1. *Describe your ideal future for the natural environment in Cobourg. Think about the water, the air, biodiversity and land.*

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
Protect the Nature Environment/ Tree Planting (16)
Parks & Recreation (7)
Water & Waterfront Protection (6)

"In nature, everything is connected, we need to protect our environment"

"Ideally we would continue to have lots of green space, parks, sports parks"

"Ensure fresh water supply is not contaminated by Cobourg effluent"

2. *Describe your ideal future for how the built environment contributes to sustainability in Cobourg. Think about the buildings, infrastructure and energy.*

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
Green Development (9)
Building Retrofits (5)
Increase Building Density (4)

"Go green and think about the environmental impact on any future development or restructuring"

"Buildings that are designed from the get-go to be energy efficient and to retrofit other buildings with these efficiencies immediately"

"Cluster these units in central areas that allow for walking to the core vs. developing by highways where driving is essential"

3. Describe your ideal future for economic sustainability in Cobourg. Think about smart growth, cost of living, jobs and investments.

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
Local Jobs & Businesses (6)
More Industry (5)
Increase Building Density (4)

"I think of jobs for the younger generations and also ones that are truly conscious of their environmental impact"

"A place where local businesses, including industry, is supported and serves the community it exists within, as well as the areas surrounding it where it makes sense."

"Cobourg should not sprawl, it should densify."

4. Describe your ideal future for social and cultural sustainability in Cobourg. Think about people, health, safety, equity, diversity and inclusion.

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
Social Inclusion (6)
Policing & Safety (4)
Community culture (3)

"A place that tries to include people into their community, even those without much political or socioeconomic influence"

"Instead of education, there should be more enforcement by Cobourg police"

"Greater social interaction, greater community pride in appearance, greater reliance and promotion for home gardens and less reliance on commercial, processed conveniences"

5. Describe your ideal future for working together to move towards a more sustainable community. Think about decision-making, community involvement, financing, etc.

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
Community Engagement (6)

Political Will (3)
Decrease taxes (3)

"Engaging the community – like this!"

"No more piecemeal consultant reports, must be an integrated plan with constant loop for all of our input"

"Economics cannot be disregarded by the vocal minority with special interests"

6. What are your proposed actions for moving towards this vision for sustainability?

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
Community Engagement (7)
Protect the Nature Environment/ Tree Planting (7)
Political Will (4)

"Fair and open dialogue on how the full community can engage in our future as residents of Cobourg"

"Cobourg could be a leader in sustainability... greening... and rewilding."

"I hope to keep making my comments and suggestions in the hopes that at least some can be picked out, worked upon and eventually accepted."

3.1.2 Youth Questionnaire

1. Describe a sustainable future for Cobourg that you would want to live in. What does it look like? What does it feel like? What components are important to this ideal future? Consider thinking about the five categories described earlier (the natural environment, the built environment, the economy, society and culture, and how we work together).

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
More Fun Activities / Improve Nightlife (7)
Limit Development (3)
Youth Opportunities (2)

"More of a nightlife"

"Stop building so many houses and we don't need anymore highways"

"Better paying and interesting jobs"

2. What is the most sustainable action you, or your family, take?

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
Waste Diversion & Reduction (17)
Personal Gardens (2)

Carpooling/ Use an Electric Vehicle (2)

"We make sure we use the right bins"

"We have a vegetable garden"

"We carpool a lot and take one car into town only"

3. What is a sustainable action you'd like to take, but can't?

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
Waste Diversion & Reduction (6)
Renewable Energy (5)
Electric Vehicle (3)

"Use less water"

"Use renewable energy"

"Electric car: Reduce emissions"

4. Are you planning to stay in Cobourg after graduating high school? Why or why not?

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)

Not Staying in Cobourg (13)
Not Sure/ Might Move (6)
Youth Opportunities (2)

"No, I don't plan on staying. There are not a lot of things to do here and the job I want would make it difficult to continue to live here"

"I'm not too sure I'd really love to get away but I'll probably end up staying here until I'm older"

"This town doesn't offer the right opportunities for me that I want to have after high school"

5. Are there any specific barriers to you staying in Cobourg?

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
N/A (6)
More Fun Activities / Improved Nightlife (5)
Youth Opportunities (3)

"No"

"Cobourg is kinda boring"

"There are not a lot of opportunities... academically, socially and in general"

6. What would make it more compelling for you to stay in Cobourg?

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
More Fun Activities / Improve Nightlife (8)
Affordability & Affordable Housing (5)
Youth Opportunities (2)

"If they add a nicer mall with way more stores, more festivals"

"Better cost of living"

"Good paying graduate job opportunities"

7. What action ideas do you have for moving towards this ideal future for sustainability?

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

Theme (# of occurrences)
Waste Diversion & Reduction (5)
Youth Opportunities (4)
Social Inclusion (4)

"Less paper use in schools"

"Scholarships and grants for people who commit to working/living here after university"

"Think about everyone, not just rich people"

3.1.3 Stakeholder Questionnaire

The following themes surfaced as a result of the open responses.

<i>Theme (# of occurrences)</i>
<i>Balance (2)</i>
<i>Drug Abuse (2)</i>
<i>Protect Natural Environment (2)</i>

"Perhaps the objective ought to be to find ways to integrate society and culture with the natural environment"

"Cobourg needs a safe injection site and more support to address the opioid crisis"

"Built environment that does not come at the expense of the natural environment"

3.2 Workshops

Though the attendance count for the workshop series was slight, the extent of ideas provided was significant. Participants provided a number of ideas at the various levels of detail the ICSP will cover, including:

- The long-term vision for sustainability
- Potential goals for the ICSP across the pillars of sustainability, and
- Actions that could be taken to promote sustainability.

This section will briefly discuss the overall themes emerging from the workshop discussions, organized by the pillars of sustainability. As these themes concern the vision and goals for sustainability, they are intended to be high-level descriptions that can be translated into low-level implementation through the forthcoming development of targeted actions. The crux of these different themes can be broadly summarized into a high-level vision as:

- Everyone in Cobourg, from resident to municipal employee, has a role to play in living sustainably though no one pillar or action will meet the needs or demand attention from all Cobourgians
- Sustainable outcomes will be realized through an array of different actions meant to “meet people where they are” in their understanding of sustainability
- Sustainability is a group effort but must be coordinated, managed, and iterated by champions within the community and Town of Cobourg
- Cobourg can and should become a living laboratory for explorations into different sustainable actions, technologies, practices, and programs.

Built Environment

The built environment pillar explores the human influence on the environment – our buildings, roads, utilities, and other infrastructure. While we all have a role to play in this area, the Town of Cobourg possesses a significant degree of influence in the management and regulation of the Town’s land use and transportation systems. This makes it a key part of the sustainability conversation.

Prominent themes emerging from the workshop series are:

- Supporting a connected Cobourg across different modes of transport, with particular reference to active transportation, on-demand electric bus transport, and car- and bike-sharing programs
- Supporting urban densification to conserve undeveloped land

- Balancing building energy efficiency design with affordability concerns
- Incentivizing, clarifying, and regulating green building construction from initial design to final approval
- Pursuing renewable energy technology (at facility- and community-wide scales)
- Ensuring energy efficiency adaptation potential for contemporary buildings (such as the provision of rough-ins for heat pumps or electric vehicle charging infrastructure)
- Regulating and standardizing low-impact development best practices as part of Town engineering standards

Natural Environment

The natural environment pillar explores the conservation of natural resources, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, and the minimization of human impact on sensitive ecosystems.

Prominent themes emerging from the workshop series are:

- Creating resilient ecosystems to contend with extreme weather events (with particular reference to Cobourg's waterfront)
- Fostering a contiguous greenspace network for both recreational use and biodiversity conservation purposes
- Reducing the "urban heat island" effect through biodiversity
- Preserving the waterfront environment as a valuable part of Cobourg's natural heritage
- Creating a framework for urban agriculture and a network of urban agriculture projects within Cobourg
- Factor natural asset management considerations into the existing municipal asset management program

Economy

The economic pillar explores the sustainable management of the local economy, the potential for sustainability-focused economic sector growth, and pocketbook issues such as affordability.

Prominent themes emerging from the workshop series are:

- Supporting sustainable municipal procurement practices
- Promoting local economic development, with emphasis on downtown Cobourg and sustainable business incubation
- Regulating the reduction of wasteful packaging used by local producers

- Facilitating education and outreach among regional educational institutions, industry groups, and labour unions to promote sustainable building practices
- Secure stable funding for sustainable building practices
- Create a Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) to support energy efficiency at the building level through municipal property taxes
- Integrate circular economy practices into Cobourg's waste management system

Society and Culture

The social and cultural pillar explores issues of human health and dignity, social cohesion, cultural development, accessibility, and equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Prominent themes emerging from the workshop series are:

- Promoting community cohesion to foster social and cultural resilience in the face of future economic, social, and environmental crises
- Leveraging local cultural programs, activities, institutions, and groups in the promotion of environmental sustainability
- Developing community infrastructure (built and programmatic) to support accessibility and environmental justice (i.e. cooling facilities for extreme weather, public washrooms for accessibility)
- Promoting dialogue and knowledge sharing with the region's Indigenous communities
- Tailoring sustainability initiatives to capture attention from an intergenerational group of Cobourgians

Governance

The governance pillar considers how sustainable action is managed, coordinated, and implemented across both the Town and community of Cobourg. Given the expansive and cross-sectional nature of sustainability, this pillar helps organize effort undertaken in one pillar with complementary efforts occurring in other pillars.

Prominent themes emerging from the workshop series are:

- Coordinating and prioritizing sustainable action through a clear, collaborative, and transparent process
- Supporting sustainable action through the development of an information repository that communicates goals, current opportunities, local champions, and educational resources

- Providing annual or bi-annual reporting and continual monitoring to support transparency and accountability in the implementation process
- Highlighting champions, celebrating milestones, and telling stories to support those achieving positive outcomes individually and collectively
- Joining existing networks and programs to gain access to knowledge and financial resources, and broaden impact
- Incorporating a formal sustainability lens for Town of Cobourg committees, administration, and Council in their respective decision-making processes
- Supporting plan implementation through resourced and dedicated Town positions (i.e. Sustainability Coordinator, Senior Ecologist)
- Promoting implementation through demonstrations, educational opportunities, and local ambassadors
- Supporting Town staff in their implementation of the plan through training and professional development opportunities
- Collaborating with regional partners (i.e. Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority, neighbouring municipalities, Northumberland County government, utility providers) to align work and achieve regional impact
- Modeling sustainable behaviour at the municipal level

4.0 Next Steps

With phase two of the engagement process now concluded, the direction provided by participants into the vision and goals of the ICSP has been incorporated into the planning process. This vital feedback, alongside best practice review and administration and Council feedback will shape the high-level direction of the plan. This high-level direction will be returned for community comment in summer 2022 prior to the full draft of the plan as a text document.

It is anticipated that the final ICSP and its supporting Green Development Standards and Green Energy Retrofit Feasibility Study will be circulated to Cobourg Town Council for review in early 2023; there will be more opportunity to provide input and review the emerging draft of the plan in fall 2022.

For more information on the project and to stay in touch with the process, please visit:
engagetcobourg.ca/integrated-community-sustainability-plan.

Thank you to all who participated in phase one and two of the ICSP engagement process. The project team is grateful for the time you've taken, the feedback you've provided, and the energy you've brought with you to each session and questionnaire.