

SUSTAINABILITY *by* DESIGN 1.0

Year One (2005-2006)



December 2006

Executive Summary

The Project

The Design Centre for Sustainability (DCS), through the project *Sustainability by Design (SxD)* takes on a new challenge: to lead a collaborative effort to produce a compelling visual representation of what Greater Vancouver region might look like in a 50-year timeframe at neighbourhood, district and region-wide scales. Absent an image of what a sustainable region could look like, citizens and decision makers will be unable to build it. The activities and results of this first project year (*SxD 1.0*) provide the first iteration of a collaboratively produced vision for a sustainable region of four million, and form the foundation for the next four years of the *SxD* project.

The project uses the charrette methodology. A charrette is a collaborative planning process that engages varied stakeholder groups to incorporate disparate viewpoints into a synthesized and sustainable solution. Project work was carried out at two general scales: the neighbourhood scale and the regional scale. At the neighbourhood scale, three case study charrettes focused on developing viable sustainable development strategies from prototypical urban conditions: corridor, edge, and node – three “building blocks” of a more sustainable region. At the regional scale, Vancouver area stakeholders and urbanists worked for a day at the regional charrette to accommodate sustainably a doubled and aging population. The resulting 50 square metre map was displayed at the UN World Urban Forum.

Other *SxD 1.0* events, presentations and exhibits, publications, coverage in the media, and the project website have and continue to disseminate results and develop awareness throughout the broader community.

Key Outcomes

Generally, the charrette process has proven to be an effective visionary tool for addressing the challenge of sustainable design at the Greater Vancouver regional scale – without municipal boundaries. This collaborative effort had the unprecedented outcome of producing a compelling visual representation of what the region might look like in a 50-year timeframe

at neighbourhood, district and region-wide scales. This vision met the region's projected population and demographic needs for 2056 by applying *sustainable neighbourhood* design, which, when widely applied, proved to be a crucial ingredient for a *sustainable region*.

SXD 1.0 was particularly successful in building sustainable development capacity within participating communities and the target group. The charrette process, a historically successful process used by the DCS, was recognized by case study and regional charrette participants as an effective way of dealing with urban design and planning issues that is also transferable to other fields. This methodology has received strong support both locally from other metro areas, where the DCS is preparing to launch new phases of work, making the DCS the primary facilitator of this holistic and participatory model for regional and local decision making across Canada.

Within many valuable discoveries, three key conclusions are of particular note: The successful redevelopment of existing low intensity development transit corridors goes hand-in-hand with supporting the development of dense urban nodes toward achieving a sustainable region. "Suburban" office parks are often located close to neighbourhoods, services and transit, and often only require better integration into the fabric of surrounding streets to achieve a more sustainable development pattern. If we start now with a new and intelligent strategy for reconditioning our streams, parks and waterways as "green infrastructure," a doubled population will produce, not a loss of green, but a revival.

The *DCS* at the UBC School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (SALA) intends to build on the success of *SXD 1.0*, sustaining the outcomes into the future with an ongoing program of research, case studies, and signature events.