



## ***Changing Values, Changing Communities: A Guide to the Development of Healthy, Sustainable Communities***

### **Introduction**

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) recently completed a study entitled *Changing Values, Changing Communities: A Guide to the Development of Healthy, Sustainable Communities*. The report examines four alternative planning approaches which have emerged in response to concerns about the liveability and sustainability of conventional suburban development patterns. The planning approaches reviewed include neo-traditional designs, transit-oriented developments (also known as "pedestrian pockets"), cohousing communities, and eco-villages.

A comprehensive evaluative framework was developed to assess the advantages and disadvantages of these planning approaches. The framework defines seven essential attributes of a healthy, sustainable community. It also identifies related planning goals and objectives, and some of the "tools" available to communities to meet these goals and objectives. The seven key aspects in the framework that must be considered in developing healthier, more sustainable communities are:

1. **Resource Conservation** — land, materials, water, energy
2. **Environmental Impacts** — greenhouse gases, ozone depletion, air/water/soil quality
3. **Economic Viability** — infrastructure, marketability, stability

**Comprehensive  
Evaluation  
Framework  
Assesses  
Planning  
Approaches**

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre *Le télétravail et le travail à domicile dans les collectivités canadiennes*.

**Tables**  
**Show**  
**Examples**  
**of Broader**  
**Goals**  
**Objectives**  
**and Tools**

4. **Equity** — access and opportunity, fulfilment of basic needs, services and amenities
5. **Liveability** — services/facilities, open space, convenience of movement, climate/weather, delight
6. **Community** — inclusiveness, participation, heritage, identity, gathering places
7. **Health and Safety** — health protection, health promotion, health care and safety

The following table is an example of how one of the above aspects (resource conservation) relates to broader planning goals and objectives and to the tools available to communities to achieve these goals and objectives.

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Goal</b>	<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Tools</b>
Land	Land is valued and conserved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Ensure efficiency in use of developable land.</li> <li>■ Preserve and enhance agricultural land.</li> <li>■ Protect and conserve natural features and sensitive areas.</li> <li>■ Minimize land development.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Land use</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Master, secondary and site plans development agreements, zoning.</li> <li>■ conservation plan</li> <li>■ solar orientation</li> </ul> <p><b>Building form and technology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ design guidelines</li> <li>■ equipment and building performance standards</li> </ul>
Materials	Optimum efficiency and conservation in use of materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Minimize use of non-renewable materials.</li> <li>■ Maximize use of renewables on a sustainable basis.</li> <li>■ Favour the use of local renewable resources.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Infrastructure and utilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Integrated resource plans* for energy, water and waste</li> <li>■ Use of living systems</li> </ul>
Water	Water is used within the carrying capacity of local natural systems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Maintain demand within limits of local natural systems.</li> <li>■ Allow maximum return to groundwater and surface water systems.</li> <li>■ Make optimum use of existing infrastructure.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Transportation and Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Integrated resource plan for transportation</li> <li>■ municipal operations</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ economic strategy</li> <li>■ resource management plan</li> <li>■ public support for green technology</li> <li>■ public education</li> </ul> <p><b>Social development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ public education</li> <li>■ consultation</li> <li>■ technology transfer</li> </ul>
Energy	Net self-sufficiency in energy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Minimize energy demand of buildings.</li> <li>■ Minimize energy demand for transportation.</li> <li>■ Maximize reliance on local renewable sources.</li> <li>■ Where non-renewable energy is used, use local sources where possible.</li> </ul>	

\* In the utility sector, an integrated resource plan is one which takes demand side options as well as supply side options into account.

The evaluative framework consists of a similar table for each of the seven aspects. The framework is essentially a checklist that can be used to help plan more sustainable communities in a greenfield context, or to evaluate the social, economic and environmental performance of existing communities.

## **Key Findings**

To evaluate the four planning approaches, the framework was applied to eight different developments, each of which was either in the planning stages or under construction: two cohousing communities; two eco-villages; and four communities considered to be representative of "New Urbanism" (The assumptions and principles underpinning neo-traditional designs and pedestrian pockets are very similar. Together the two models have come to be known as "New Urbanism".)

The case studies represent some of the most innovative developments being planned today. They range in size from a 17-unit cohousing development to a new town being planned for 27,000 people. All but one of the projects are being developed in Canada.

According to the evaluations, all of the case studies represent improvements over conventional suburban development patterns. In other words, they all exhibit certain common features which are generally believed to improve community health and sustainability. The developments in the case studies tend to be denser and more compact than standard suburban designs, with a finer mix of land uses and pedestrian-friendly layouts. Streets have been designed to accommodate cars, though their social function has also been recognized. A grid pattern of roads is often favoured over curvilinear layouts to improve the efficiency of transit circulation. Civic buildings, landmarks and other focal points are emphasized as community gathering places. A broader mix of more affordable housing, responding to a diversity of needs is generally encouraged. And, where appropriate, cost-effective alternative planning and engineering standards are being incorporated to reduce costs and improve performance and aesthetics.

Overall, while the study was originally intended to review four distinct concepts of urban form, each reflecting particular goals and ideals, the case studies suggest that today's most innovative urban developments in Canada do not conform to any one of these concepts to the exclusion of the others. Rather, individual projects seeking to break out of the conventional suburban mould are much more eclectic, borrowing from all of the concepts as appropriate.

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## **Case Studies**

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## **Represent**

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## **Most**

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## **Innovative**

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## **Developments**

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To obtain a copy of the report, call the Canadian Housing Information Centre, (613) 748-2367. For further information, contact Mr. David D'Amour, Socio-Economic, Policy and Research Division, CMHC, (613) 748-2325.

#### Recent Research and Development Highlights

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For more information on CMHC housing research, contact:

**The Canadian Housing Information Centre  
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation  
Room C1-200  
700 Montreal Road  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0P7**

**(613) 748-2367**

**Canada**

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