

TOWN OF BANFF

Environmental Stewardship Policy

Town of Banff Environmental Stewardship Policy

The Town of Banff is committed to delivering high quality services while minimizing its impact on the environment. Through good corporate environmental management, and by promoting opportunities for community participation in environmental stewardship, Banff will become a sustainable community within a National Park and World Heritage Site.

The Town will ensure that ecological integrity is protected while employing a balanced approach to social and economic development. The Town will pursue the fundamental objective of nurturing and maintaining a high quality environment, making Banff a place for people without compromising it as a place for nature.

The Town will lead Banff towards an environmentally sustainable future by:

- meeting or surpassing all applicable legal and regulatory requirements;
- continually improving environmental performance through ongoing assessment, planning, monitoring and management;
- ensuring that environmental protection and enhancement is considered in all decision-making for planning, growth, development and operations;
- striving to maintain and enhance a community culture that respects, appreciates and reflects the surrounding environment;
- providing its citizens, businesses, Parks Canada and other stakeholders with the opportunity to be involved in promoting a sustainable community.

Adopted by Council 14 January 2002.

Ecological Integrity:

...an ecosystem has integrity when it is deemed characteristic for its natural region, including the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes.

(Parks Canada – Panel on Ecological Integrity)

Environmental Stewardship:

...caring for the land and associated resources so that healthy ecosystems can be passed on to future generations.

(Natural Resource Management Dictionary)

Sustainable Community:

...a community that is environmentally and fiscally responsible, and preserves or improves quality of life without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

(Town of Banff – 2001)

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Context:

The Banff National Park Management Plan and Town of Banff Incorporation Agreement set out commitments to “maintain the town site as part of a World Heritage Site” and “to maintain a community character which is consistent with and reflects the surrounding environment”¹. World Heritage Sites, as designated by UNESCO, “are considered to be of such exceptional interest and universal value that protecting them is a concern of all mankind”².

In 1998 the Banff Community Plan was established as the primary planning document for the Town of Banff³. The philosophy, goals and objectives of the Plan are directed towards the maintenance of Banff as a ‘sustainable National Park community’. Within the Plan, Banff’s unique situation is seen as providing a “tremendous opportunity for the town to become a model environmental community reflecting the fundamental principles of National Parks”⁴.

The concept of a ‘sustainable Park’ can be traced back to the passing of the National Parks Act in 1917, which states “...parks shall be maintained so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations”⁵. A key concept of the Plan is Banff as a ‘balanced community’, where appropriate tourism activities must be accommodated within a balanced social and environmental framework⁶. “Sustainable” for the purposes of the Banff Community Plan is defined in the Plan⁷ as:

- meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;
- fiscal responsibility that does not burden future generations;
- social diversity, flexibility and adaptability with universal access to affordable services that meet basic needs;
- environmental protection and enhancement directed by an assessment and monitoring framework based on the principle of “no net negative environmental impact”;

¹ Banff Community Plan, p.3,4

² Banff Community Profile, p.7

³ Banff Community Plan, p.6

⁴ Banff Community Plan, p.7

⁵ Banff Community Profile, p.5

⁶ from Banff Community Plan, p.21

⁷ see Banff Community Plan, p.19

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- being a role model for communities around the world facing limits to growth and environmental issues on a larger scale.

According to the Banff Community Profile, “the natural environment is both Banff’s central attraction and chief reason for its existence”⁸. Through the Banff Community Plan, environmental protection and enhancement is a key focus of Town policy-making, which is intended to protect and preserve resources with an emphasis on maintaining and enhancing ecological integrity.

The 1997 Banff Park Management Plan, as part of ten Principle, Policy and Legislative Elements, details requirements for the Town of Banff related to environmental performance⁹. These are:

- meet the requirements of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act;
- “work toward defining and becoming a model environmental community and (will) address issues such as noise, lighting, air quality, non-native plant species, phosphates, etc” .;
- “continue to show leadership in the conservation and use of water”;
- “participate with Parks Canada and other jurisdictions in regional planning and other regional initiatives”.

In addition, one of thirteen stated goals of the Plan is Environmental Protection, defined as: “To provide a quality environment for the coexistence of humans and nature”¹⁰.

Another key theme of the Banff Community Plan is that of Banff as “an improving and involved Community”. As Banff residents care deeply about their community and want to sustain and improve it, they have a keen desire to be involved in finding “Made in Banff” solutions. Accordingly, the Plan proposes a structured process of monitoring, information dissemination and citizen participation so that residents can take an active role in achieving the Plan¹¹. A comprehensive, effective approach to environmental stewardship and becoming sustainable needs effective stakeholder consultation and involvement with all levels of external interested parties.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has defined a ‘sustainable community’ as a ‘smart’ community that preserves or improves quality of life while minimizing its impact on the environment¹². It achieves these goals using fiscally and environmentally responsible policies, and attains economic, environmental and social health by:

⁸ Banff Community Profile, p.7

⁹ Banff Community Plan, p.11

¹⁰ Banff Community Plan, p.22

¹¹ Banff Community Plan, p.22

¹² This paragraph derived from the first three paragraphs of from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities website “What is a Sustainable Community” as at November 1, 2001, located at http://www.fcm.ca.scep/what_is/index.htm.

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- making the most efficient use of resources;
- generating the least amount of waste;
- providing high quality service to its residents;
- living within the carrying capacity of its natural resources.

The role of sustainable communities in achieving overall global sustainable development, and a validation of the Town of Banff's vision to be a sustainable National Park community, is provided by the following quote from the National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy:

'Communities' will become ever more critical agents in the quest for sustainable development over the next quarter century. Decisions made today about urban transport, energy, water and waste infrastructure, buildings and even products and services will have an ongoing environmental impact – positive or negative – for decades. If Canada hopes to make a positive contribution to global sustainable development, perhaps nothing is so important as 'getting communities right'¹³.

The Town of Banff has developed the *Town of Banff Environmental Stewardship Policy* to provide a focal point for addressing:

- the environmental components and goals of the Banff Community Plan, and other stated commitments;
- environmentally-related requirements of the Town of Banff Incorporation Agreement, Banff National Park Management Plan, and other legislation or agreements; and
- the pursuit of sustainability and continual improvement of environmental performance.

¹³ Sustainable Cities Initiative Final Report and Recommendations – 1999, National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy