

Sustainability report unveiled

Mark Laycock, Carstairs Courier

Carstairs has already implemented several sustainable programs, events, regulations and services, but there is always room for improvement, concludes the recently released sustainability report.

The 50-page Town of Carstairs Community Sustainability Plan outlines suggestions, details and implementation plans for improvements in five key pillars of the town: social, cultural, environmental, economics, and governance.

The draft copy was unveiled to the public during an open house held at the Half Century Club last Thursday.

The report is the product of discussions between the Sustainability Committee, numerous consultations, public surveys and a workshop with residents over the last seven months.

The report is designed to act as a guide for council to ensure that Carstairs will continue to grow as a sustainable community well into the future. Although council is not necessarily obligated to fulfill the recommendations, council is asked to refer to the document on a yearly basis and consider various programs and initiatives and apply them to future development.

Sustainability co-ordinator Jan Thompson says that despite input from the community being a bit lower than she'd hoped, the committee still accomplished the goals it had established.

"It would have been nice to see more participation, but really when I look back at the numbers we had and these public open houses, larger communities had less than what we had, so that was encouraging."

One point Thompson and the report both stress is that several of the suggestions and recommendations made by residents at open houses have already either been implemented in the past, or are currently underway. Thompson said this discovery was certainly encouraging, as it showed that the town and its residents have been trying to be sustainable for some time.

The report is composed of various descriptions of success that can be achieved in the next 20 years. Each description is measured by how long it would take to achieve that goal — one year, two to five, five to 15, or 15 or more years.

For example, from the social pillar it was identified that youth should be included at town council. Ways of implementing this could be by educating children about local government at school and including youth on various committees. The report says that this could be accomplished any time in the next 15 years by raising awareness for youth or starting various youth programs or youth business partnerships.

Thompson says the suggestions outlined in the report are only the beginning and that as the years progress new goals and suggestions can be added.

The document will be monitored by the yet to be formed Sustainable Implementation Advisory Committee. The committee will review the document annually to measure successes and keep track of the progress of various goals. Council is asked to refer to the document every year to see what could be accomplished in the next year's budget.

Every five years the document will receive a thorough review and update to keep up new developments and changes in the community.

"That's the important part is that we do monitor it on a yearly basis. We're thinking every year it will be gone through and it will be decided upon what we have money for and what is feasible and what is a priority, and every five years we'll look through the whole plan," explains Thompson.

Residents are welcome to review the plan once it is finalized and approved by council at the end of July. Anyone looking for more information, or who is interested in joining the advisory committee, is asked to contact Jan at 403-337-3341.