

Taking Action... for Social Sustainability in our Community and District

*A Community Input Session about Social
Needs and Actions in the Olds Community
and District*

Thursday, October 15, 2009
Olds Town Office



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COMMUNITY

Part of COMMUNITY is UNITY and part of UNITY is U and I...
Without U and I there is no UNITY and
Without UNITY there is no COMMUNITY.

This is also true for OPPORTUNITY...
(Rita Thompson)



Taking Action for Social Sustainability in our Community and District Olds – October 15, 2009

Overview of the Session

The Community Lifestyles Committee of the Olds Institute for Community & Regional Development, in partnership with the Town of Olds, hosted a community input session about the social aspects of the Olds Strategic Sustainability Plan (OSSP). The session was held on Thursday, October 15, 2009 starting with a casual dinner at 5:30 p.m. and the session running from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Participants represented a wide range of agencies and organizations that provide services and programs to address social needs in the community. The facilitator was Barb Pedersen of Barbara Pedersen Facilitation Services Inc.

Welcome and Introductions

Rita Thompson, Chair of the Community Lifestyles Committee, welcomed participants to the session and thanked them for their interest and willingness to give their expertise and ideas. The Facilitator reviewed the agenda and purpose of the session, namely that participants would *Learn* about the OSSP, would *Affirm and Apply* the OSSP by reviewing and giving feedback on the relevant areas of the plan, and *Give Ideas for Action* on ways to start to implement the OSSP.

Participants introduced themselves by giving their name and organization and/or role in the community. At table groups, participants then answered the question, *If you had a magic wand, and wanted to change one thing related to the social aspects of your community, what would it be?* The purpose of the question was to encourage participants to focus on the evening's topic, start brainstorming actions, and articulate their interests.

Learning about Social Sustainability for our Community

Rita Thompson provided information about the background of the Olds Strategic Sustainability Plan (OSSP) and the purpose of the evening's session, namely that the Committee seeks community input on the social aspects of the plan and the interest by individuals in further information or action to carry out the plan. Norm McInnis, Chief Administrative Officer with the Town of Olds, provided information about possible funding sources for activities related to the social aspects of the OSSP.

Affirming and Applying the Social Aspects

The relevant social areas of the OSSP discussed during the session were Affordability and Housing, Food, Governance and Partnerships related to social agencies, Health and Social, Transportation, and Culture related to diversity and ethnicity. A handout with excerpts from the OSSP of Description of Success, Preferred Future Initiatives, Priorities, and Strategies for each area was distributed. Participants, working in six randomly designed groups, discussed each of the six areas through a Carousel Activity. Questions to guide the discussion were:



- Understand: What questions do we have about this area to help us understand it? What else do we need to know about this area?
- Respond: How do I feel about the need in our community for these priorities and strategies? Is action needed?
- Apply: How can achieving these goals strengthen our community?

The purpose of the discussion was to allow participants to gain information about the social aspects of the OSSP, to give their opinions on the needs of the community related to the social aspect, and to start to think about actions and solutions.

Participants recorded their input on flipcharts for each area. For this report, the facilitator loosely clustered the answers in similar themes.

OSSP Area: Affordability and Housing

Description from OSSP: (A) How to make living and playing in our community affordable for community members. (B) How to meet the housing needs of diverse community members. Note: This section deals with affordability and housing – not the term affordable housing.

Input from Participants:

Statement: Housing is a basic need.

Cluster: Ideas for actions

- 1) We need a definition of affordability – the word causes confusion, means different things to different people.
- 2) Determine the root causes...why people cannot afford housing. Consider these factors:
 - a) Single parents
 - b) Single people
 - c) Domestic violence
 - d) Working poor

- e) Newcomers
- f) People in crisis

- 3) Determine the factors leading to lack of affordable housing:
- a) Lack of affordable housing creates a negative ripple-effect.
 - b) New landlord regulations imposed by the town is impacting renters.
 - c) No vacancies
 - d) No reasonable choices
 - e) Single family housing becomes multi-family dwelling creating basic safety issues.
 - f) Creation of slum-lords.
 - g) College town – transient use of housing, student housing for families
 - h) High cost of utilities and security deposits
 - i) Limited subsidized housing
 - j) Lack of lots of units
 - k) Rent supplement access guidelines have changed
 - l) Rental properties: no pets, no kids
 - m) Is the issue cost of housing or variety (that is, lack of variety)?
 - n) What is the incentive to build “affordable” housing?

Cluster: Suggested actions for affordability and housing area

- a) Attainable – municipal housing task force
- b) Need accessible housing
- c) Need a continuum of housing options
- d) Need high density housing, e.g. Apartment blocks, townhouses
- e) Lower expectations
- f) Trailer courts?! Sell lots!
- g) “Affordable” on whose terms? Developers or Residents?
- h) Are current models (age-restricted communities) preventing cross-generational interaction?
Yes!
 - Is this a healthy social environment?

OSSP Area: Food

Description from OSSP: How to encourage a healthy, nutritious, and sustainable food supply which maximizes opportunities to build the social, cultural, and economic capital of our community

Input from Participants:

Cluster: Issues with the Food Bank

Food Bank → Charity Model



- a) Lack of transportation to get to and from Food Bank
- b) Accessibility: two hours once a week
- c) Physical accessibility
- d) Grocery stores away from downtown core
- e) Growing number of the working poor
- f) Lack of supply of food at Food Bank to accommodate the populace
- g) Judgemental attitude at the Food Bank
- h) Food Bank supplies other districts

Cluster: Food Bank – Suggested actions for the Food area

- a) More hours
- b) Accessibility

- c) Welcoming
- d) Attitude adjustment
- e) Hired manager – not volunteer driven
- f) Increase employment above minimum wage

- g) Involving service users in decision making, value for value exchanges (e.g. volunteers)
- h) Users be volunteers

- i) Community awareness
- j) Awareness – many don't know there is a need; many are not aware of agencies working to help

Cluster: Other programs to complement Food Bank

- a) Community Gardens – Lunch Program
- b) Look at other Food Bank models
- c) Grow a Row
- d) Christmas Angels
- e) Community Kitchen

Cluster: Suggested services

- a) Availability of food specific to the ethnicity of users
- b) Education for sustainable healthy eating
- c) Education for appropriate/healthy food choices
- d) Supply of locally grown/produced food
- e) Awareness of FAIR TRADE concept
- f) Better advertisement of "Food for Life" Series



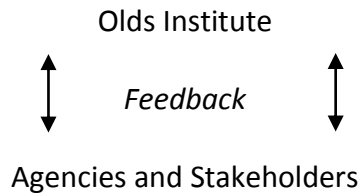
OSSP Area: Governance and Partnerships of Social Agencies

Description from OSSP: How local government and other stakeholders will organize and collaborate in decision-making and the implementation of the OSSP

Input from Participants:

Cluster: Overall knowledge of governance and partnerships

- a) Which agencies?
- b) How do agencies fit in governance?



Cluster: Issues affecting governance of agencies

- a) Reactive rather than proactive social agency boards
- b) Lack of interagency dialogue, cooperation, and sharing of resources
- c) All accessing same funding source (government or casinos)
- d) People on Boards for the wrong reason
- e) How do you instil responsibility in the community to be on Boards?
- f) Governance models are OLD – need to restructure model to fit current volunteer realities
 - Time commitment
 - Short term desirable
 - Action oriented
- g) STP – same ten people
- h) Lack of definition of “sustainability”
- i) Various numbers of social agencies with similar segments of society with no/little resource sharing.

Cluster: Suggested actions for effective governance

- a) Governance Boards need to include youth.
- b) Governance Boards need succession planning.
- c) Draw isolated Boards into the Olds Institute family
- d) How to involve businesses in the process? How do they partner?
- e) Increase social resources (\$\$\$) to encourage participation based on enough staff
- f) Create awareness of what social agencies exist and how they can be supported

OSSP Area: Transportation

Description from OSSP: how to move people and materials within and without the community in a more sustainable and effective manner

Input from Participants:

Cluster: Assessment, research and planning for transportation solutions

- a) Who are the groups in need of transportation? Needs Survey
- b) Analysis of need for transportation and creation of access to it and how to determine the value/fee. Could this be a service group's non-profit project?
- c) Community Needs and Resources Database
- d) Best/promising practices from other communities...
- e) Connecting to other communities (public transportation)
- f) Let's keep in carbon neutrality in planning.
- g) Proper town planning – November 12 meeting
- h) Is our community walkable?
- i) Parking

Cluster: Factors showing the need for public transportation

- a) Family, seniors, and immigrant families needing transportation
- b) Concerns both within Olds and transportation to appointments etc. in nearby urban centres
- c) East vs. West residents – many lower income individuals in areas far from stores and services
- d) Commercial opportunities on east side??
- e) Insurance liability issue for volunteer drivers

Cluster: Question the need for public transportation

- a) Demographic shifts have led to a need for public transportation
Or
- b) Are we considering such a move for a SMALL segment of the population?
- c) Analysis seems anecdotal.

Cluster: Suggested actions for transportation

- a) Coordination of existing transportation resources and better utilization
- b) Taxi Card
- c) Can transportation be used to reduce drinking/driving?
- d) Do we need to move from a driving culture to a biking culture – trail connectivity, et al?

OSSP Area: Health and Social Needs

Description from OSSP: how to meet the health and social needs (including physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional) of the community

Input from Participants:

Cluster: Inventory of community agencies and organizations in this area

- a) How many and what types of agencies are in Olds and area?
- b) How do we reduce overlaps?
- c) What needs are these agencies meeting?

Cluster: Suggested actions for health and social needs

- a) "One-stop-shopping" for clearing house of information and maybe even coordination/delivery of services for everyone! Young mothers, seniors, immigrants, et al.
- b) Priority #2 (create an environment that fosters collaboration among our social and service organizations) is more achievable, i.e. Strategic Plan involves all community groups.
- c) Creation of Community Database (needs and resources) for individuals AS WELL as organizations, groups (public or private) services or specialized. To assume we streamline and NOT overlap... But still satisfy needs.
- d) How do we do/accomplish these things? Do we need a Social Development Officer? (Is this the Town or someone else?)
- e) Help people to HELP themselves: training!
- f) Sometimes this means YOU have to receive TRAINING (linked to job/carer) in order to receive your financial support.

Cluster: Costs associated with the health and social needs

- a) How can we accomplish this at little or no cost to users?
- b) COSTS???

OSSP Area: Culture

Description from OSSP: How arts, culture, and heritage will be supported, enhanced and delivered, and how they will stimulate and support the transition to sustainability in our community

Input from Participants:

Cluster: Defining culture

Culture is who we are...

- How we identify who we are.
- Race and creed
- Multicultural community

Quality of life helps a community grow.

Cluster: Meeting the needs of diverse populations within our community

- a) Are we meeting the basic needs of the diversity within the community?
- b) Language skills
- c) How to address demographics of “alternate” lifestyles – are we safe? – respect their choices
 - Create a culture of sensitivity/acceptance et al of such
 - Promote understanding and education
- d) Do we welcome immigrants to our community?



How do we educate the community on who it is in our community?

Cost of use of facilities is a barrier

Volunteers support culture – how do we support volunteers?

Cluster: Suggested actions for the culture area

- a) Assure forward movement toward realization of the GATEWAY CENTRE.
- b) Community/convention centre
- c) Continue AWESOME work of Uptown Olds group
- d) What kind of art/drama/theatre do we have access to?
- e) Do we need a theatre group in Olds?
- f) Arts/cultural activities keep people in town.
- g) Walking paths and gardens needed
- h) How can businesses be a part of culture?

Plenary Group Discussion after the Carousel Activity

Following the Carousel Activity, participants in a large group discussion, talked about what stood out for them from the discussions about the OSSP social areas. The individual comments were recorded as verbatim as possible.

Individual comments:

1. Our community has... struggle in the face of plenty, e.g.
 - a. Plentiful Food Bank system however access problems
 - b. Lots of vehicles however lots of people who need to get around
2. What about involving grassroots companies to take part in solution development?
3. Need to talk with people who are accessing the services; connect people in our community who are involved and/or affected.
4. The diversity of the group we talked with today was encouraging and enlightening.
5. Work with the people who work at the agencies.

6. Culture: OSSP is working because some of its objectives are being achieved – largely through Arts and Heritage.
7. Dichotomy – community needs to ensure essential human needs while also enhancing community life for all citizens.
8. All topics are interconnected such as Housing, Food, and Transportation.
9. Common threads – how do we knit them together?
10. Same people are working in the leadership roles over and over. We do not want to tax volunteers so they get burnt out. Volunteers are aging.
11. Need for us to improve communication and sharing, particularly of what is going on elsewhere in the community.
12. The priorities in the OSSP range from broad to specific in nature.



Giving Ideas for Action

Participants, working in five randomly assigned groups, developed Actions Plans based on the question, *What can the community do to achieve the social goals of the OSSP?* A discussion technique called Ritual Dissent and Assent Method allowed each group to receive two rounds of feedback on its action plan from another group. The five Action Plans are placed on pages 12 to 15 this report.



Plenary Group Discussion after the Action Plan Activity

Following the Action Plan activity, participants in a large group discussion, talked about what stood out for them from the small group work to develop action plans for the OSSP social areas. The facilitator asked the following two questions and the individual comments were recorded as verbatim as possible:

What are some immediate actions that can be carried out?

1. Food Bank issue could be addressed and hopefully solved by February 2010. Connect with the group at the Olds College.
2. Assets and needs inventory (Asset Mapping) could be carried out.

- ❖ Work with community service providers and agencies on a report back on how they are contributing to OSSP and what success they have. (OAGSL - Olds Advisory Group for Sustainable Living, PAPA - Partnership Action Plan Agreement)
3. Form an Adhoc Committee for development of a Social Action Plan



What comments do you have about actions to move the social aspects of the OSSP forward?

1. Communication can be immediate and ongoing.
 2. Ask consumers about needs. Ask the people who are using the services, who are affected by the decisions.
 3. Utilize TransCanada Theatre to sponsor/host with the Olds Institute speakers, films, documentaries on social issues – partner with businesses (provide opportunities for people to LEARN)
 4. Be willing to think out of the box. Explore creative, realistic alternative actions.
5. Review OSSP Public Consultation sessions and see what progress has been made and what information is available to assist the action plans.
 6. How do we not miss information from this session? How do we capture all of the ideas from the small group discussions that won't show on the Action Plans?
Ideas:
 - a. Follow-up with group members and spokespeople if needed
 - b. List spokesperson's name and contact information on the Action Plan.
 - c. The Report will be distributed to participants who are encouraged to give feedback on the notes.

Facilitator's Identification of Common Ideas in the Action Plans

While preparing this report, the facilitator identified several common ideas in the Action Plans to assist the Community Lifestyles Committee and interested participants as they start to implement the OSSP.

1. Conduct Asset Mapping (inventory, database) of the community's strengths, services, needs
2. Build upon existing services
3. Involve users and consumers of the services in the discussions and decisions
4. Involve all aspects of the community – e.g. businesses
5. Foster public awareness of social needs (e.g. one idea is a speaker/s hosted by OI)
6. Communicate between agencies and organizations providing services
7. Undertake a Social Development and Action Plan with clearly defined vision, mission, goals, and actions

Expressing Interest in the Next Steps

What happens next? How can you be involved?

Rita Thompson, Barbara Hill with the Town of Olds, and the facilitator explained that the facilitator would prepare a report reflecting the discussion of the participants and forward to Rita and Barbara. The report would then be forwarded to all participants.

Participants were asked to indicate their interest in further involvement in the development and implementation of the actions to achieve the social priorities in the OSSP. They were asked to do so by writing commitment cards, if they chose, with name and interest. These names were provided to the Community Lifestyles Committee of OI in a separate list.

Closing Remarks

Rita Thompson thanked the participants for their involvement and shared how she and the Community Lifestyles Committee were committed to an open, transparent, and collaborative process to engage and work with the community.



Action Plans

Action Plan Group 1

Bruce Herzog – 403-556-4285, Faye Byrgesen

- Olds Institute supports a documentary/ speaker at Olds College (TCT Theatre) for the community to come together. (Must be a social aspect that is motivating and uplifting.)
 - Voucher system for taxis
-

- Relate topics to the six sustainability issues
(We pull from our successes.)
- Olds Institute might not be the “doers” but organize it.
- Use the Kiwanis Series as a template.
- Make use of the ones who are doing the work already (e.g. ONP and social groups)
(MV. Movie Group – Museum)
- Funded – featured businesses to sponsor
- Far reaching effect (address minority issues)
- Raise public awareness

Action Plan Group 2

Haley Horvath, Janice Ware

- ❖ Olds Advisory Group for Sustainable Living – finalization of PAPA (Partnership Action Plan Agreement)
 - Including a pathway of information
 - Enhance broad awareness of PAPA
 - Funds are already allocated (coming to a theatre near you soon)
- ❖ Communication
 - ✓ central databank
- ❖ Develop a process to receive input from others who are not here tonight
 - ✓ Youth Social Justice group from HS
- ❖ Involve consumers of services
- ❖ Involve corporate sector
- ❖ Identify consumer of services and ensure that it is THEIR needs not that of service providers
- ❖ Asset assessment – program/service inventory
- ❖ 1 on 1 consultation with agency/group identifying what they are already doing that has been addressed and is relevant to the OSSP.

Action Plan Group 3

Rob Smith

Creation of Social Action Plan!!!!

What do we want to be? What does our community support?

How to fund permanently, not subject to “whimsical” economic flows

- Based on our long term vision
- Focus on specific, community determined and driven outcomes ...NOT bureaucracy!!!
- Protect our vision ... regardless of funding criteria

Create clearly defined Terms of Reference → Governance structure...
Assure transparency

Create CDO Community Development Office

“Sell” our vision ... charisma to help build the social development of our community

Create a culture of “CHANGE” → open to...

HOW? → Create more connectivity “greater good”

- ⇒ MODEL the desired behaviour
- ⇒ coordinate community needs and resources
 - finding the “best fits” for volunteers, services – any and all resources (timing, skills, dynamicism of all interested)
 - establish /facilitate the results-oriented partnerships/linkages
- ⇒ Assure communication with grassroots agencies (Olds Institute and Food Bank, et al.)
 - also ensure to access the real “grassroots”
- ⇒ streamline “choices”
- ⇒ HUB – resources
- ⇒ Utilize existing resources (studies, et al) to avoid “reinventing the wheel”

**Build TRUST
among partners!!**

Action Plan Group 4

Robbin Bowman

RAYS

Vision

To identify assets and needs to coordinate resources

Leaders: OSSP/OI/Town of Olds/FCSS

= Adhoc Committee to identify Strategic Plan

Description of Success

- **Inventory Assets (Mapping) = Vision (Community Needs)**
- **Create Database = Needs Analysis (Gaps) Overlaps**

Dedicated staff person = HUB for the RESOURCE

- **Develop communication "Governance"**

- **Buy-in of the community**

Cost = Who Pays for it? – FCSS/Town???

Win/Win = need to engage corporate social responsibility – return on investments

Action Plan Group 5

Ray Hoppins

Understand what is happening now!
 Communication and Evaluation with stakeholders
 What are other communities doing? E.g. Grande Prairie
 Building on existing research and planning.

Proactive quick wins, e.g. Food Bank
 ✓ Make changes within two months

- Outside box
- 21st century approach
- Base camp
- Meritocracy governance

How are we doing at filling the gap?

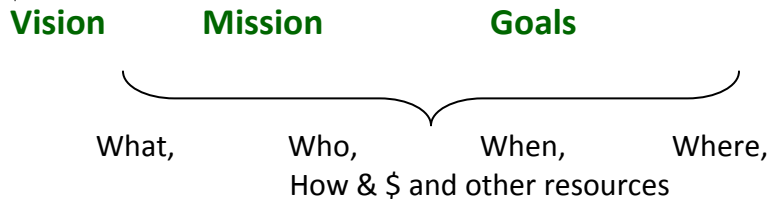
- ✓ Open mind
- ✓ Open to change
- ✓ Transparent

Plan
 People
 Purpose
 Partners

Good process,
 Not quick fix

Social Action Plan

- ⇒ Principle-driven
- ⇒ Value-driven
- Existing plans
- People who use services
- Public



Report Card!

Fluidity

Some Priorities
 Ways to Evaluate

Additional Information about the Action Plans

The facilitator contacted the spokespeople for each of the Action Plan groups to ask for additional comments about their group's Action Plan. These comments are provided below.

Community Capacity Building & Asset Mapping (CCBAM) ~ what is it?

Asset-based Community Building is an effective way to animate, connect, and inform people, and to create an environment in which relationships can build. The asset focus can be a catalyst and a spark for people to discover, (or, re-discover) access, and mobilize their unrecognized (or forgotten) resources, and engages people who have not yet participated in the life of the community.

The idea of *CCBAM* comes from the belief that everyone has a talent or gift to share with others and opportunities must be created where the interchange can happen. These special gifts are often untapped because people may not realize the talents they have are special, unique, and valuable to others, or they may never have been asked to share their gifts. Often people require connection to start talking and sharing.

CCBAM includes everyone; it encourages conversation and created an environment where people become acquainted, relationships can grow and people are interested and motivated to support each other. It does not mean searching for 'the needy' and community deficiencies; rather, it is connecting and talking with many citizens, providing ways for citizens to talk to each other, develop relationships to share many gifts and capacities.

The outcomes of using this model are:

Planning:

- a direct link to all to an informed, connected and animated community
- a mechanism for health, and other systems to truly listen to the community to actively participate in community planning and implementation

Action and Animation

- an informed community
- emergence of groups of citizens who can speak for and to their community
- the formation of meaningful relationships and networks between people in the community and also between communities
- animation of citizens in the community

Connections & Resources

- identification of the assets and resources that community citizens, associations and businesses have to share with each other
- *CCBAM* nurtures relationships between people, neighbourhood groups, and businesses. the groups may create a written account or story, a summary feedback loop, and an asset map that creates a visual that can be used to continually spark participation and pride

The beauty of utilizing this format is that it provides a process to follow to achieve the desired goals that integrates a communication feedback loop AND a visual map of all the discoveries along the way. And, the best part, in my opinion, is that it is 'strengths based'.

Further resources on this concept and models can be found at:

- Susan Roberts Community Building Resources - CBR (780)484-9045; email; raff@cbr-aimhigh.com or www.lcbr-aimhigh.com
- Kretzmann, J.P. & McKnight J.L. (1993): Building Communities from The Inside Out; A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing A Community's Assets.