Strengthening Neighbourhood Resilience
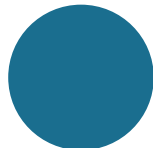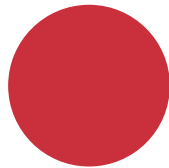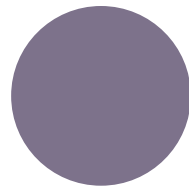
Opportunities for Communities & Local Government

Strengthening Neighbourhood Resilience: Opportunities for Communities & Local Governments

Introduction

This report highlights some of the research and approaches that have been explored and the lessons that have been emerging during the beginning phases of the Building Resilient Neighbourhoods project. This pilot project in BC's Capital Regional District is working to support neighbourhood resilience today as a way to strengthen the cohesion and capacity of neighbourhoods to respond to climate, resource, and economic challenges in the future.

The Building Resilient Neighbourhoods project is facilitated by four partner organizations:

- Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria (CSPC)
- Transition Victoria,
- Fraser Basin Council's Smart Planning for Communities Program
- Canadian Centre for Community Renewal,

with funding support from the Victoria Foundation and Vancouver Foundation. More information about this ongoing effort can be found at the CSPC website at www.communitycouncil.ca

This report overviews three key aspects of the project:

Understanding Resilience:

What have we learned about the characteristics of resilient communities from our research and engagement processes so far?

Characteristics of Resilience:

What are some of the key characteristics of resilient communities, and what are some guiding or inspirational examples of resilience at the neighbourhood level that have been occurring here or elsewhere in the world?

Building Resilience:

What are some of the key roles that different sectors – such as local governments, non-profits, and citizen groups – can play in fostering resilient neighourhoods?

What is Community Resilience?

Communities today face a complex range of social, environmental, and economic challenges. Many communities are seeing that new ways of addressing these challenges are needed, approaches which acknowledge the interrelated nature of these issues. A focus on "resilience" can provide that lens and framework.

Resilience is our ability to respond and adapt to change in ways that are pro-active, that build local capacity, and that ensure essential needs are met.

Along with creating the ability to respond to shocks and threats, resilience is about increasing a community's capacity to respond pro-actively and enhance well-being even while under stress. A focus on resilience emphasizes the dynamic nature of communities and the fact that they are always changing.[1]

According to the Government of Australia,

"Resilient communities have a high level of social capital. That is, mutual trust, social norms, participation & social networks. Resilient Communities also possess the necessary resources such as strengths and abilities, required to overcome vulnerabilities and adapt positively to change."[2]

[1] Building Resilience: Ideas for Local Governments Responding to Climate Change, University of Melbourne. http://www.vlga.org.au/Resources/Liveable_Just_Toolkit.aspx

[2] "Building Inclusive and Resilient Communities. Australian Social Inclusion Board. June 2009.

Why is Resilience so Important?

Communities today are faced with multiple, complex challenges – and the list is growing. Across the country, we are facing the effects of climate change, deteriorating infrastructure, population growth, and an aging population – all of which are putting pressure on provincial, regional, and community services and resources. There is growing debt at household, government and corporate levels, and wages are not keeping pace with the cost of living. The gap between the rich and the poor is becoming bigger, not smaller.

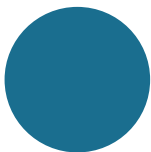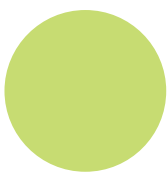Our natural resource base is diminishing and ecosystems are threatened.

If ever there was a need for whole communities to come together to adapt to change, it is today. Change is hard at the best of times, and even harder at the worst of times, so we need to start now to strengthen our resilience skills and approaches; to create new ways of living in harmony with the planet and each other.

"Community resilience involves a philosophical shift in relations between the state and civil society that changes the parameters of how local communities organize and act". [3]

Beyond Preparedness

Resilience is often taken to mean the ability of communities to respond and build back quickly after a disaster or crisis (e.g. storms, economic downturns etc.). Indeed it is this, but increasingly it is being recognized that for resilience to be effective, our thinking needs to include efforts to build stronger and more cohesive communities today, in ways that not only help us respond to crises but also ward off future threats. This means a focus on community building, addressing inequities that exist for vulnerable or marginalized groups, and strengthening social ties today, not just in response to emergencies.

For local governments, this may require a new way of thinking about the relationships between communities

and local and regional governments. According to one international group examining the policy challenges of community resilience, "by building on existing local relationships, using local knowledge and preparing for risks, your community will be better able to cope during and after an emergency. The challenge is... how central government can redefine and transform its role to be supportive of public engagement. Resilience... is not meant to justify a new round of social programs, even if they have more of an outreach focus. Rather, community resilience involves a philosophical shift in relations between the state and civil society that changes the parameters of how local communities organize and act". [3]

3   ""Policy Challenges in Supporting Community Resilience". Working paper by Bach et al presented initially at the London Workshop of the Multinational Community Resilience Policy Group, November 4-5, 2010. http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4563

4   Sustainable Cities Institute Blog post "The Parallel Paths of Resilience and Sustainability" posted January 22, 2013. http://www.sustainab-lecitiesinstitute.org/view/page.basic/blog/feature.blog/institute_pov
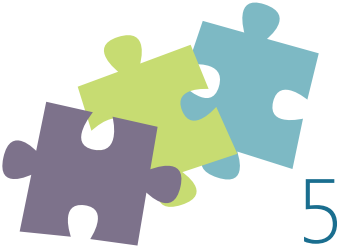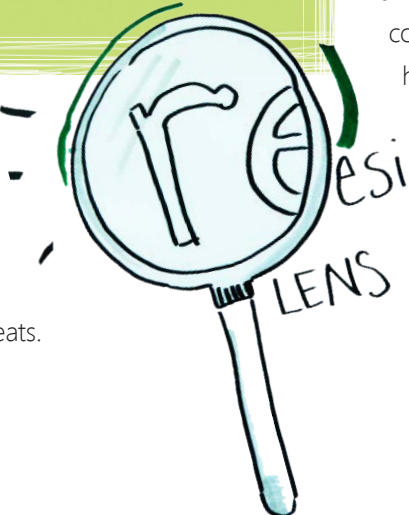
Using a Resilience Lens

Resilience can be considered as one "lens", or way of looking at our communities. There are other lenses – and they are all useful or important in different ways. For example, a sustainability lens can help us consider if our social and economic lives are in balance with the limits of nature. An asset lens, or appreciative-inquiry lens, can help us view things from the perspective of our strengths and what is working well. A city planner's lens might focus on ensuring land use and zoning is in sync with long-term community development needs. Many people in different roles use different lenses to help consider situations and strengthen communities from different perspectives.

The resilience lens can help us strengthen our ability to act pro-actively, collectively, and in ways that increase our ability to adapt or respond successfully in the face of multiple trends or threats.

The resilience framework is based on the idea that communities are complex systems. It challenges us to look at our communities and neighbourhoods holistically, and move beyond sector-specific strategies which often attract a limited segment of the population. Instead, a resilience lens encourages us to consider the interconnections between community issues and systems, and to focus on long-term adaptive capacity that cuts across silos. This lens can help expand participation as we work to activate local institutions and social capital in ways that appeal to a wide range of interests of citizens from all walks of life. This kind of socially diverse cohesiveness helps meet challenges now, and in the future.

The resilience lens can help us strengthen our ability to act pro-actively, collectively, and in ways that increase our ability to adapt or respond successfully in the face of multiple trends or threats.

"Through this lens, resiliency recognizes that long-term solutions to a (acute or chronic) city issue may not exist in isolating and fixing just that issue; rather the 'answer' might lie in better understanding systemic relationships within the city and working to strengthen ostensibly disparate issues at the same time." [4]

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LINKED-UP THINKING

Is it accurate to describe a city or town as 'resilient' because it was able to build back after a natural disaster, even though other factors, such as poverty or income inequality might remain the same or even worsen during the same period?

Excerpt from Sustainable Cities Institute Blog post "*The Parallel Paths of Resilience and Sustainability*" posted January 22, 2013. http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/view/page.basic/blog/feature.blog/institute_pov

traditional lens

- OCP: land-use/zoning; Economic development; business/industry; Social Planners: housing, poverty, food security

- Looks at a sector or single system

- Engages citizens based on interests and knowledge

- Leadership typically comes from one sector

- Identifies priorities based on what will strengthen a particular sector

resilience lens

- Considers how to mobilize and sustain pro-active community response to the most significant risks

- Looks at the whole community as interacting systems

- Engages all citizens – resilience affects everyone

- Leadership typically comes from multiple sectors

- Identifies priorities based on their impacts on strengthening long term adaptive capacity

A "Place-based" Neighbourhood Approach

The Building Resilient Neighbourhoods project focuses at the neighbourhood scale because of our interest in supporting comprehensive, place-based change in an urban setting. By using a "place-based" rather than "issue-based approach", the project supports people and groups in neighbourhoods to build resilience at the local level.

Our focus on neighbourhoods stems from a growing movement recognizing that solutions and strategies to many of the global issues we face – such as reducing fossil fuel consumption – can be best found at the local level. A neighbourhood focus emphasizes people's connection to place, and provides a manageable scale where people can often see first-hand the impacts of their actions. In this way, the neighbourhood scale often engages and excites people by demonstrating that change at this level is far-reaching, yet feasible.

REFLECTIONS – WHAT WE ARE LEARNING:

Throughout the learning sessions hosted by Building Resilient Neighbourhoods in 2012-13, one theme that emerged from participants is the importance of comprehensive approaches to neighbourhood and community building. Participants identified that comprehensive approaches are often missing. We heard that better and more frequent connecting across issues or sectors such as food security, renewable energy, affordable housing, and community social cohesion, with a goal of fostering collaboration through a resilience lens, is something many communities recognize as a key need.

A comprehensive approach draws attention to the cross-sectoral, foundational challenges to neighbourhood resilience, such as the importance of community-controlled finance (economy), community-controlled land and buildings (infrastructure), and the importance of local decision making and control.

In the workshops, almost all the focus groups independently arrived at plans to do cross-sectoral projects, seeing such work as an important and valuable priority that resonated with everyone's interests and needs.

affordable housing

community social cohesion

food security

renewable energy

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CHARACTERISTICS OF RESILIENT NEIGHBOURHOODS

Leadership & Community-wide Planning

Attitudes & Values

Strengthening the Local Economy

Infrastructure & Resources That Meet Essential Needs

Each community or neighbourhood is unique, and there is no fixed "recipe" for building community resilience. However, while the context and process for strengthening resilience will vary for each community, we do know from existing research that resilient communities demonstrate common characteristics. The Building Resilient Neighbourhoods project has drawn on research originally conducted by the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal to identify characteristics of resilient neighbourhoods along four dimensions: **positive attitudes and values; proactive and ongoing leadership development and planning; a localized economy, and a high degree of local access to and collective ownership of resources and assets.**

While the characteristics to the right are organized based on these four dimensions of resilience, it should be noted that these dimensions are often inter-connected. Activities at the community or neighbourhood level, and many of the examples provided, will often address more than one dimension of resilience. It is also important to note that resilience changes over time, and that it can be strengthened – the characteristics are not fixed. Part of this process is to help communities assess their resilience strengths and weaknesses and then create a strategy to fortify areas where they need to be more resilient.

Roles in Fostering Resilience

One of the cornerstones of building more resilient communities and neighbourhoods is fostering greater collaboration across sectors and between residents, organizations, and local governments. Within the collaborative process of strengthening resilience, each sector brings a different sphere of influence and set of "tools" they can offer. For example, local governments have a key role to play in creating enabling policy frameworks and tools. Community organizations can provide services, facilities, and

programs, and facilitate engagement processes. Residents may foster leadership, energy, and relationships that are fundamental to community life. In each dimension of resilience listed in this document, we provide some ideas of the different roles each group can play, or tools they can draw on, to help build more resilient neighbourhoods and communities. These are not intended to provide a comprehensive list, but rather starting places for consideration and spurs to creative problem-solving.

Attitudes & Values

When we think about assets within a community or neighbourhood, we often first think of the physical resources or infrastructure that exists. These physical resources play an important role in affecting community resilience; however, there are also many other less tangible assets that make one neighbourhood distinct from another. The attitudes, behaviours, and values of residents affect the neighbourhood "culture" or the "the way things are done around here." These attitudes and values greatly influence a community or neighbourhood's resilience, as does the social infrastructure of communities, including relationships between community members, levels of trust, and informal networks. Some of the key characteristics of resilient neighbourhoods include these less tangible aspects of community life such as connection between neighbours, residents' sense of belonging and identity, respect for diversity and inclusion, and neighbourhood attitudes.

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Resilient Neighbourhoods Attitudes & Values

CHARACTERISTICS:	EXAMPLES MIGHT INCLUDE
There is a sense of respect, or positive regard, for each other and the neighbourhood	• There is evidence of care for public spaces • Public celebrations/events are well attended • Citizens support each other
The neighbourhood has a "can do" attitude and gets things done	• Citizen work parties are common • Identified needs tend to get addressed • There is not much "blaming" that goes on
There is a spirit of mutual assistance	• People in the neighbourhood help each other • People show support for those less fortunate • Volunteerism is strong
There is support for learning and skills development at all levels	• A range of formal and informal workshops are offered and well attended • There is inter-generational skills transfer • Labour market opportunities have been identified
Citizens demonstrate respect for ecological limits	• There is support for recycling, waste reduction, compost • Water conservation is evident • Energy conservation is evident
The neighbourhood values diversity and is inclusive of all populations and perspectives	• There is welcoming and integration of new comers • Organizations intentionally reach out to those at the margins (disabled, youth, isolated seniors) • An openness to new ideas is common
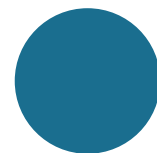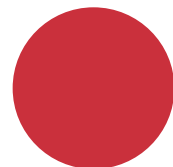
Roles to Foster Resilient Attitudes & Values

REFLECTIONS – WHAT WE ARE EXPLORING:

Throughout our work on the Building Resilient Neighbourhoods project, we have seen a strong interest in developing new ways to build a greater sense of connection and cohesion amongst neigbours.

One growing area of activity that we are witnessing is street or block-level activities that promote relationship-building between neighbours. These activities are often informal and encompass elements of fun and socializing such as block parties and community dinners.

Many neighbours are getting together to create infrastructure that promotes sharing between neighbours such as book boxes, tool sharing, or garden sharing. Using social activity as a starting place, some blocks are getting together through "parties with a purpose" to explore issues of common concern such as energy efficiency or food security.

WHO	POSSIBLE ROLES & TOOLS
Local Governments	• Grants and incentives that support community-building activities and local "ownership" of issues • Community engagement processes that foster networking and connections (part of planning and implementation of plans) • Recreation/Cultural programming • Educational programming • Neighbourhood beautification and identity building
Community Organizations	• Act as local connectors, connecting people's gifts and assets • Community building programming (intergenerational, intercultural) • Neighbourhood communications systems • Services to support marginalized people and foster inclusion • Community engagement processes that foster networking and community building • Asset mapping
Neighbours/Community Members	• Street-level activities that promote connection and build social capital (parties with a purpose, tool/garden sharing, book boxes, community dinners etc.)

Transition Streets

Coming out of the Transition Towns movement, Transition Streets is an opportunity for groups of neighbours to come together to look at how to save money and reduce energy and resource use. Working together over a period of several months, the group explores five topics related to building resilience through a guided curriculum: local food, water use, energy use, transportation, and waste/consumption. Individuals and their families then identify the actions they wish to take in each area.

A group of neighbours on McKaskill Street in Victoria, British Columbia participated in a Transition Streets pilot.

While the group achieved significant energy reduction goals, the project also had a number of unanticipated benefits in terms of building relationships amongst neighbours. One of the leaders of this group mentioned that he had lived on the block for fifteen years and, though he knew his neighbours' enough to say hello, he never had something concrete to engage them with. When he saw the Transition Streets project, this gave him the courage and the reason to go around and talk to his neighbours. From there, so much more has happened.

Here are some of the results from the McCaskill Transition Street pilot with eight households:

- four household energy audits leading to two new heat pumps and improved insulation

- one household obtaining a low-flow toilet, a new shower head, and a rain barrel

- different habits for washer, dryer, and dish washer use

- more bike and bus riding

- more gardening and local food buying, and a group seafood purchase

- tool sharing and skill sharing/teaching

- a new sense of community on a street where no one knew each other before!

For more information:
http://transitionvictoria.ning.com/page/transition-streets

Social Capital

One key indicator of resilient communities and neighbourhoods is the level of "social capital" that exists. In their Exploring Community Resilience handbook, the UK's Fiery Spirits Community of Practice outlines three types of social capital identified by Tom Sanders:

Bonding capital is the close ties between people in similar situations – such as family and close friends. It builds trust, reciprocity, and a shared sense of belonging and identity.

Bridging capital is the looser ties to similar people, such as casual friends, colleagues, or people we meet through social networking sites. It builds broader, more flexible identities, and enables innovations to be shared across networks.

Linking capital helps ensure that people with different levels of power and status meet and learn from one another. It is the ability of groups to access networks of power and resources beyond their immediate community.

Excerpt from Exploring Community Resilience Handbook. http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegie/media/sitemedia/Publications/ExploringCommunityResiliencedownload.pdf

# Infrastructure & Resources that Meet Essential Needs

Physical infrastructure, community design, and our use of resources can support or thwart neighbourhood resilience. Indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, density, and proximity of services to residential areas are all factors to consider in building resilient neighbourhoods. Physical infrastructure and community design are vital in encouraging other aspects of resilience such as community cohesion, pride, diversity, and collaboration. Involving the community in planning and designing local infrastructure can often be just as important as the facilities themselves by fostering engagement and leadership.

It is important to ensure that essential needs can be met close to home. Resilient neighbourhoods are aware of and working toward local access to food, affordable shelter for all residents, renewable energy, and reduced energy use. They understand how important it is to have ownership and control of these essential services as a means of reducing their vulnerability, and as potential sources of revenue. Of course, enhancing a neighbourhood's food, shelter, and energy systems may often require working with community partners outside the neighbourhood, so resilient neighbourhoods seek and develop such external relationships as well.
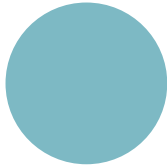
CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES MIGHT INCLUDE
Healthy ecosystems and greenspace are valued and accessible	• Greenspace is accessible • Groups exist who have ecosystem education and conservation as a mandate (e.g. streamkeepers)
Community gathering spaces exist and are well used	• There are public & private spaces available • There has been recent effort to beautify or make gathering spaces accessible
There is attention paid to creating an accessible village core and essential services	• Core village exists and is accessible • Essential services exist (groceries, hardware, clinics, recreation, daycare)
There is a plan to ensure land uses and tenures will provide affordable housing and food supply needs	• Resilience-based land use plans exist • Public policies support allocation of land for food and housing • There are groups with local/regional food and affordable housing man dates reduction, compost

Roles to Foster Resilient Infrastructure & Resources

WHO	POSSIBLE ROLES & TOOLS
Local Governments	• Long term planning for resilience • Land use planning, zoning and bylaws (e.g. for walkability, greenspace, essential services, commercial activity, gathering spaces, affordable housing, food production, etc.) • Helping develop financing supports • Technical Assistance • Process navigators
Community Organizations	• Leadership • Partnership building and access to resources • Mapping of assets and opportunities • Community ownership and redevelopment • Neighbourhood beautification projects • Provision of neighbourhood/community services (food security, affordable housing etc.) • Accessible community facilities (e.g. school as community hub)
Neighbours/Community Members	• Leadership and energy • Skilled labour and expertise • Continued collective ownership/stewardship • Develop/participate in community gardens, community greenspace (e.g. streamkeepers) • Neighbourhood clean-ups • Garden sharing

REFLECTIONS – WHAT WE ARE EXPLORING:

People seem to like tangible projects like personal storm-water recycling systems or backyard agriculture, and tend to gravitate to very small and household-level activities. This is good, but there is also a need to build the skills, knowledge, and relationships to enable larger-scale infrastructure projects such as neighbourhood-wide renewable energy supplies, eco-friendly housing developments, food processing facilities, or trading hubs. We are curious about the relationships between micro or household-level infrastructure projects, and how they may support interest in and capacity for larger-scale efforts. We hope to explore what it takes, in terms of internal and external relationships across sectors, for households and neighbourhoods to "scale up" proven innovations from micro to macro.

The Fernwood Neighborhood Resource Group Society (Fernwood NRG) is a social enterprising, community-based non-profit organization that is democratically run by and for residents of the Fernwood neighbourhood in British Columbia's Capital Region. Fernwood NRG works to improve the quality of life for people living in Fernwood by building neighbourhood capacity, providing affordable housing, and managing a suite of properties and buildings including the Fernwood Community Centre.

Today Fernwood is a vibrant, diverse and healthy community with a bustling centre. Fernwood square was recently recognized as one of the top five public spaces in Victoria by an award- winning national magazine, Spacing. However, before 2005, Fernwood was facing significant challenges. These were heightened by civic action to 'clean up' downtown that forced illicit activities outward into neighbourhoods like Fernwood and North Park. The neighbourhood was also grappling with long-term under-investment by the municipality, contributing to neighbourhood decline.

At the same time, the condition of another property in the community was causing concern. The Cornerstone Building, located in the very core of the neighbourhood, had fallen into significant disrepair and was contributing to the overall rate of decline in the area.

While there was a general consensus in the community about the need to address the condition of the building, residents were divided about how to do so. In 2005, with a vision of creating a more environmentally and socially sustainable neighbourhood, a group of citizens coalesced around the idea that if they were to effect change in the neighbourhood, the solutions would need to be driven by the neighbourhood itself, and began negotiating for the building.

This was the first step towards taking ownership and control of neighbourhood assets to address the needs of the community. Soon afterwards, neighbourhood residents got involved in work parties to demolish and renovate the Cornerstone building into a mixed-use development. Through this project they were able to turn an empty building into a thriving business hub, creating economic development opportunities and a space for citizen's involvement in the community development process. Soon, other businesses started coming to the core, supporting each other and supporting people in Fernwood by providing employment and investment in the community.

Read the whole story of the Fernwood NRG here: http://www.communitycouncil.ca/pdf/CommInnov_Fernwood_NRG_formatted.pdf
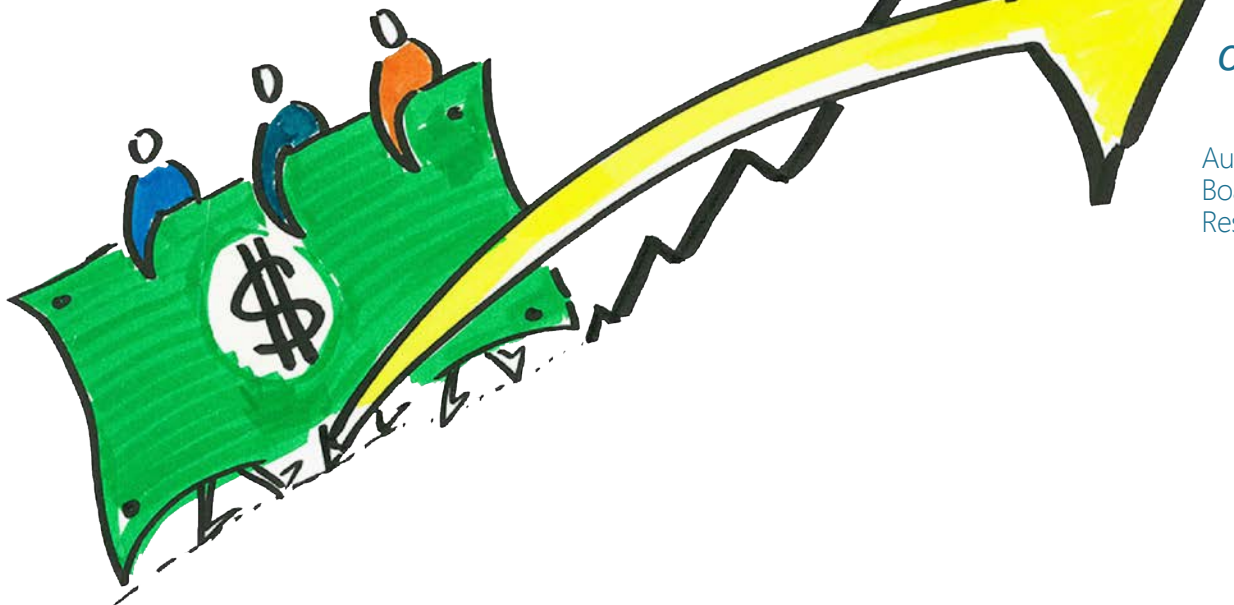
Strengthening the Local Economy

A strong local economy is a foundation for a resilient community; however, in this sense, "strong" cannot be equated with dependency on foreign investment or constant growth without regard for ecological limits. Instead, resilience requires that we understand local economies in terms of community economic development and quality of life indicators; for example, increased tool sharing may be economically "bad" in the short-term for a franchise hardware store located in a neighbourhood, but economically "good" over the long-term for the neighbourhood overall. By focusing on increasing local control and ownership of key resources, businesses, and finance, communities are able to build their own resilience and decrease their vulnerability to external economic pressures. Part of what we have seen, in communities that have been able to adapt, is an emphasis on locally-owned businesses (as opposed to externally-owned businesses that are simply

located locally), "shop local" education, and efforts to "plug the leaks" – to keep more local dollars re-circulating rather then going outside of the community. These ideas are often new for residents who have grown up with traditional top-down, constant-growth economic thinking, so it often takes time to educate and engage residents and organizations in the rationale and approaches of a "localized" economy that is closer to a "steady state".

In order to achieve this, it is important to pay attention to the core functions of an economy, with an eye to bolstering local control of resources against dependence on global or external credit and investment capital, human resource development, land and research, and planning services.

"Economic resources include access to equity capital, credit, human capital and expertise. Developing locally-controlled sources of finance and capital can help empower a community to build enterprise and employment opportunities."

Australian Social Inclusion Board, "Building Inclusive & Resilient Communities"

Strengthening the Local Economy cont'd

BUILDING HUMAN RESOURCES

PARTNERSHIPS

ACCESS TO CREDIT

ACCESS TO EQUITY

RESEARCH, PLANNING, & ADVOCACY
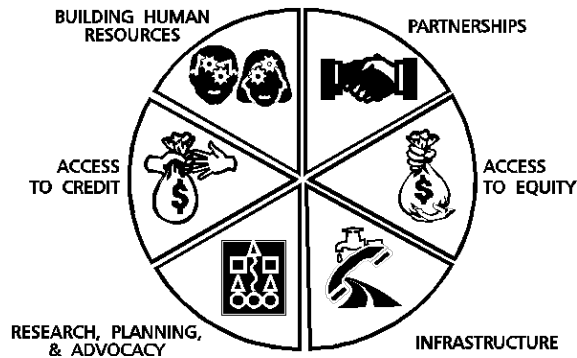
INFRASTRUCTURE

From the Community Resilience Manual, Centre for Community Renewal, 2000.

ACCESS TO CREDIT

PARTNERSHIPS

RESEARCH PLANNING & ADVOCACY

Strengthening the local economy is related to the "Infrastructure and Resources" dimension insofar as local ownership and control of resources such as buildings, land, and finances are often key factors in economic resilience. Economic resilience is also connected to the "Planning and Leadership" dimension, since economic planning requires strategic thinking and implementation over longer periods of time. Developing short and long-term strategic implementation plans to nurture economic resilience is an area where local governments can play an extremely important role; however, this would require incorporating cross-sectoral consultations and a resilience lens into economic planning rather than letting plans be steered only by an established business sector using an economic-growth lens.

CHARACTERISTICS | EXAMPLES MIGHT INCLUDE

CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES MIGHT INCLUDE
There is collaboration to ensure the basic needs of all citizens are met	• Economic resilience plan exists; progress reported • Diverse stakeholders collaborate around a common social, environmental, and economic agenda
Major employers, assets and sources of finance are locally owned/controlled	• Top five employers are locally owned businesses • Docks, parks, beaches, public facilities and utilities • Forms of social/citizen investing are available
There is ongoing effort to diversify the local economy	• Prevalence of entrepreneurial development, business resources, succession planning, financing • There is a municipal local procurement policy • A leakage study/import replacement study has been conducted
There is openness to informal types of exchange	• e.g. Local Exchange Trading Systems, barter, tool /bike/ride sharing, food box programs, co-operatives, farm markets
The neighbourhood looks outside itself to collaborate, seek and secure strategic resources and policies etc.	• Skills, expertise and finance gaps get filled • Partnerships exist • Relationships with various levels of government exist

Roles to Foster Resilient Neighbourhoods & Local Economies

WHO	POSSIBLE ROLES & TOOLS
Local Governments	• Zoning and bylaws to support locally owned businesses (tax incentives, zoning) • Purchasing policies to support locally owned business • Community Economic Development Planning (staff) • Convene cross-sectoral consultations around social and economic planning • Enabling policy: Commercial kitchens in homes, urban agriculture, etc. • Share and scale-up best practices
Community Organizations	• Neighbourhood-level skill and workforce development • Business Improvement Zones • Local skills inventories • Coordination of alternate systems of exchange – barter systems, local currencies etc. • Entrepreneurship programs and support • Community financing and micro-loan programs • Local business mapping, directories
Neighbours/Community Members	• Purchasing power • Local investment circles, community investment funds • Get creative and dare to imagine • Barter systems, tools shares, local currencies etc. • Neighbourhood/household asset maps that facilitate sharing of assets, tools and skills

Resilient Neighbourhoods and Local Economies

The Ainsworth Street Collective

The Ainsworth Street Collective in Portland, Oregon is a great example of neighbours coming together to strengthen their local economy, while at the same time building relationships and social connections. The group, which started informally out of a potluck between neighbours, has grown to include ninety households. Neighbours gather for monthly social events which include informal exchanges where they share food and drinks, clothes, plants, and other household items through a "Freecycling" table. In addition to the monthly potlucks, there are also interest-specific subgroups that meet throughout the year, and the Collective has taken on many specific projects including wholesale food purchasing, a neighbourhood farmer's market, neighbourhood recycling, and emergency preparedness.

One of the group's goals was to create an economy at the neighbourhood level, encouraging buying from neighbours first. To do this, they created the Ainsworth Street Business Directory which lists members' services and skills. The Directory features pet, baby, and house sitters, a home repair person, a writer and copy editor, and even a Celtic Quartet.

To share their experience and lessons, the Ainsworth Street Collective has created a neighbourhood handbook: http://vc.conscious-choices.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Ainsworth-Sust-Collective-Handbook-2-10-.pdf

T'souke First Nation

In 2009, the T'Souke First Nation identified energy security and a sustainable future as top priorities for their community. Out of this visioning they developed an action plan based on four interrelated pillars: energy autonomy, food self-sufficiency, cultural renaissance, and economic development. Since then, nine band members have been trained as solar installers through a training program that builds on the oral traditions of the community, resulting in the installation of solar PV and solar thermal on many of the Band buildings, including the fish hatchery, the community hall, band hall, and canoe shed. In addition to meeting their own energy needs, T'Souke First Nation is able to sell surplus clean energy to BC Hydro, and they have partnered with a neighbouring municipality to install 1200 solar hot water heaters. They have developed a local eco-tourism industry with visitors from around the world visiting T'Souke for tours of solar installation, gardens, and T'Souke cultural activities.
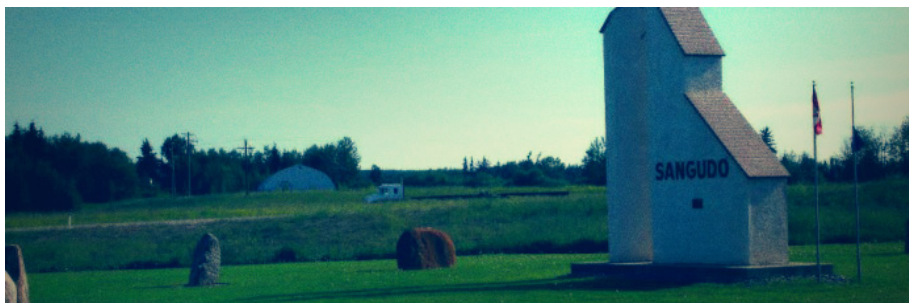
Resilient Neighbourhoods and Local Economies

Sangudo Investment Co-op

"Declining enrolment. Low property values. "For lease" signs in shop windows. These are such common sights in rural parts, it's a relief to hear about a place that is beating the macro-trends. When the place is Sangudo, Alberta, it's more than a relief – it's astonishing. Sangudo's 400 citizens didn't wait for a town council, regional municipality, financial institution, or provincial or federal agency to take the lead. They took it themselves." Citizens in Sangudo, Alberta created a Community Investment Co-op by pooling resources and investing them in local projects to revitalize empty buildings and provide local services. They identified four keys to their successful local turnaround: community vision, trusted leadership, an economic strategy and being compelled by a wider agenda for change.

As a result of Sangudo's success, the province of Alberta has since supported five more similar pilot projects.

In the Capital Region of BC, a group of citizens and organizations led by the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria is drawing from the inspiration of Sangudo to create a local community investment fund to support affordable housing and community enterprise development.
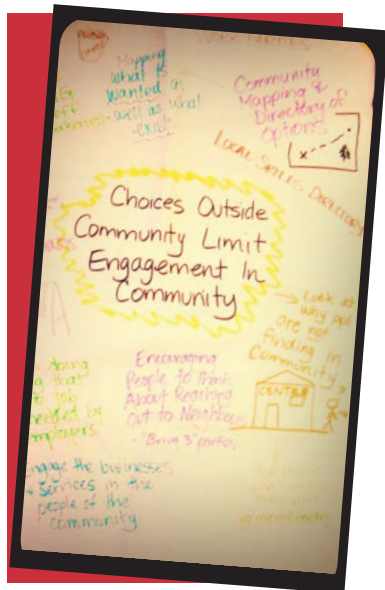
COMMUNITY VISION

TRUSTED LEADERSHIP

AN ECONOMIC STRATEGY

COMPELLED BY A WIDER AGENDA FOR CHANGE.

The full story can be found at: http://communityrenewal.ca/i4gateway007-turn-around
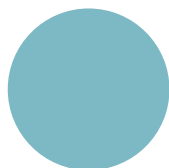
Leadership & Community-wide Planning

Resilient neighbourhoods and communities look ahead to plan for the future, and engage residents in building a common vision for their community. This involves collaborative, engaged planning across sectors and interest groups. Leadership capacity is an important aspect of resilience, and in resilient communities, leadership is shared amongst diverse citizens and groups, and cultivated on an ongoing basis. Resilience is about adaptation, but it is also about the ability to experiment, innovate and learn as we go. This type of learning culture is an essential underpinning within resilient neighbourhoods, and it can be intentionally fostered.

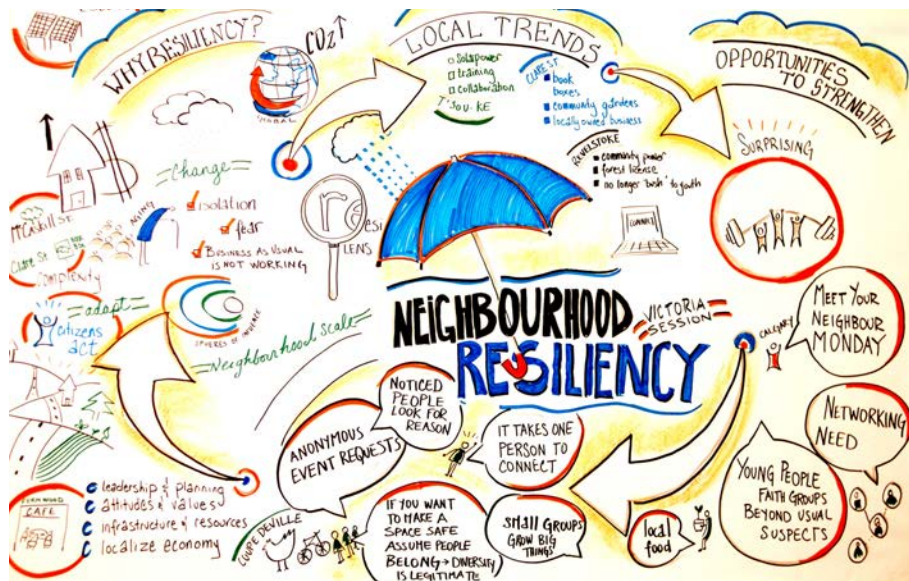| CHARACTERISTICS	EXAMPLES MIGHT INCLUDE
There is a common vision and goals for the future of the neighbourhood.	• A vision and plan for resilience exists or is being developed through a public process
There is pro-active citizen engagement in planning and action around the goals.	• Organizations pro-actively invite participation • A number of citizen groups exist and take action • Turn out for neighbourhood planning is high
Groups and organizations collaborate with each other around common goals	• Sector tables exist for joint planning/work • There is a cross-sector leadership group
There is pro-active and ongoing leadership recruitment and development	• Leadership is diversified and represents the population (age, gender, cultures) • Youth council exists • Leadership programs are available • Organizations have formal mentoring
There is a sense of experimentation that contributes to a culture of continuous learning.	• Groups and organizations assess impacts and progress • There is openness to adapting mid-course, or "trying something new"

Roles to Foster Resilient Leadership & Planning

WHO

POSSIBLE ROLES & TOOLS

Local Governments

- Long term neighbourhood planning
- Community-led planning
- Citizen leadership development programs, youth councils etc.
- Emergency Preparedness planning & support
- Linking and coordinating various planning processes, engaging citizens and partners in implementation strategies
- Policy innovation labs

Community Organizations

- Facilitate neighbourhood leadership programs
- Facilitate collaborative planning between different neighbourhood stakeholders
- Neighbourhood visioning and asset mapping
- Building partnership and accessing resources
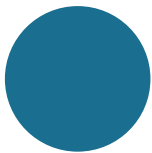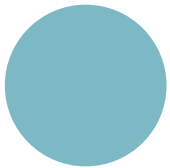- Local skills inventories

Neighbours/ Community Members

- Leadership, vision and passion
- Ownership over community plans
- Identify roadblocks and work with partners to address

REFLECTIONS – WHAT WE ARE EXPLORING:

Throughout the Building Resilient Neighbourhoods workshops, a common theme that emerged is the need to engage more of the community in resilience-building activities, and concerns about developing and diversifying community leadership. Many community champions are struggling with burn-out or feeling over-extended. This highlights a need to foster leadership that supports transitions toward greater sustainability and resilience in the places we live. This includes a model of leadership that:

- meets others where they are and encourages participation across all segments of the population;

- shares power and builds consensus around a common vision;

- sees the big (systems) picture and also supports small-scale (e.g. household or street-level) projects as part of working toward whole systems change;

- works to connect people and organizations within and between the household, street, organization, institution, and city-wide scales;

- engages and trains youth as a means of being pro-active about leadership succession planning.

Seattle Department of Neighbourhoods PACE Program

The City of Seattle's Department of Neighbourhoods has demonstrated commitment to cultivating neighbour-hood leadership through the development of the People's Academy for Engagement and Action (PACE). The goal of this leadership training program is to improve district and community council participation and to enhance involvement in other grassroots community organizations in Seattle. Part of the mission is to expand civic involvement by also building the capacity of people who work with underrepresented communities.

The program targets emerging leaders (ages 21 and up) who are newly engaged in the community and would like to acquire the additional skills needed to be more effective when engaging Seattle neighbourhoods, including underrepresented communities. It includes a seven-session curriculum with specific focus on community organizing and how to work with and access local government.

For more information: http://clerk.seattle.gov/~public/meetingrecords/2012/parks20120405_4a.pdf

Other goals are to build participants capacity to:

Refine their organizing & communication skills

Increase their community and individual capacity to sustain vital neighborhoods

Identify resources and avenues to empower communities

Cultivate a deeper appreciation of cultural competency and inclusive civic engagement.

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN A NEIGHBOURHOOD

While every initiative that builds neighbourhood resilience is led by citizens and organizations together, these efforts can be supported through local or *regional government programs. Here are some brief samplings of what some governments are doing to support comprehensive neighbourhood efforts.*

examples

Manitoba Neighbourhoods Alive!

In Manitoba, the Neighbourhoods Alive! program supports "long-term, community-led, social and economic development" and neighbourhood revitalization through a citizen and community-led approach to community planning and neighbourhood revitalization. The program supports targeted neighbourhoods through funding streams designed to support community development efforts in a range of areas, from housing, crime prevention, and education to training and community recreation. In June 2012, this comprehensive place-based approach animated through Neighbourhoods Alive! was brought into law through the passage of the Community Renewal Act. The act mandates the development of community renewal plans in consultation with residents, establishes a Community Renewal Advisory Committee made up of community-based stakeholders to provide advice on community renewal issues, and creates a Deputy Ministers' Committee on Community Renewal to ensure ongoing support and high-level leadership on issues of community renewal.
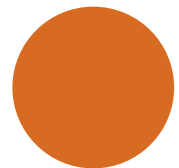Find out more at: http://www.gov.mb.ca/housing/neighbourhoods/

City of Edmonton Great Neighbourhoods Initiative

The City of Edmonton Great Neighbourhoods Initiative aims to support equitable, sustainable, and livable neighbourhoods through cross-departmental collaboration. The goals include delivering services in neighbourhoods more efficiently, developing comprehensive neighbourhood planning, enhancing two-way communication with residents and supporting their efforts to create the place they want their neighbourhood to be, and investing in targeted capital projects.

The program is supported through a number of specific projects and initiatives including:

- Neighbourhood Revitalization
- Great Neighbourhoods Improvement Fund
- Neighbourhood Business Development Investments
- Neighbourhood Engagement Strategy and small project grants
- Good Neighbours Awards
- Neighbourhood Interactive Maps

Find out more at: http://www.edmonton.ca/for_residents/neighbourhoods/building-great-neighbourhoods.aspx

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examples

Portland Neighbourhood Economic Development Strategy

INCREASE VISIBILITY OF THE BUSINESS DISTRICT

GROW MORE JOBS

STRENGTHEN EXISTING BUSINESS

FILL VACANT SPACES

The Portland Neighbourhood Economic Development Strategy articulates how community partners, business leadership and public partners can use focused neighbourhood-level actions to collectively foster economic opportunity and neighbourhood vitality. The goal of the strategy is to create thriving commercial areas, successful neighbourhood businesses, and equitable access to quality jobs. The related Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative supports neighbourhood vitality in six targeted urban renewal areas through a series of community planned and led actions, such as:

- Increase the visibility of the business district
- Grow more jobs
- Strengthen existing businesses
- Fill vacant spaces

These efforts are supported in numerous ways:

- Seed funding and technical assistance
- Matching funding to the neighbourhood to hire a Community Economic Development coordinator
- Funding for local projects raised through tax-increment financing
- Organizational and individual capacity building and cultivation of leaders

Learn more at: http://www.pdc.us/for-businesses/business-district-programs-support/neighborhood-prosperity.aspx

For more information about the project, the Characteristics of Resilience Checklist, notes from our learning events or more extensive resource lists:
http://www.communitycouncil.ca/initiatives/RN2013.html

The Community Resilience Manual and Tools and Techniques for Community Economic Development: http://communityrenewal.ca/community-resilience-manual

Building Inclusive & Resilient Communities. Australian Social Inclusion Board. http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au/sites/www.socialinclusion.gov.au/files/publications/pdf/building-community-resilience-brochure.pdf

Exploring Community Resilience. A handbook developed by the UK's Fiery Spirits Community of Practice. http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/carnegie/media/sitemedia/Publications/ExploringCommunityResiliencedownload.pdf

Building Resilience in Rural Communities Toolkit http://learningforsustainability.net/pubs/Building_Resilience_in_Rural_Communities_Toolkit.pdf

This toolkit is the outcome of a three year research project examining resilience in a rural community by The University of Queensland and University of Southern Queensland, Australia

Building Resilience Toolkit, www.baylocalize.org/toolkit . A project of Bay Localize in the Bay Area, California. The Toolkit 2.0 is a collection of online tools to help you understand local impacts of the climate and energy crisis in your region and what you can do about them.

Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement. Includes a learning centre and resource library with extensive tools & resources http://tamarackcommunity.ca/

The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families & Neighborhoods. Tools & Networking to accompany the book by John McKnight & Peter Block: http://www.abundantcommunity.com/

Resilience Circles. US-based program to support small neighbourhood based learning circles around resilience & action. Includes links to curriculum resources. http://localcircles.org/

Articles, Blog Posts & Reports:

Sustainable Cities Institute Blog post "T*he Parallel Paths of Resilience and Sustainability*" posted January 22, 2013. http://www.sustainablecitiesinstitute.org/view/page.basic/blog/feature.blog/institute_pov

"*Policy Challenges in Supporting Community Resilience*". Working paper by Bach et al presented initially at the London Workshop of the Multinational Community Resilience Policy Group, November 4-5, 2010. http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4563

Examples included in this report:

Transition Streets
http://transitionvictoria.ning.com/page/transition-streets

Fernwood Neighbourhood Resource Group
http://fernwoodnrg.ca/

Ainsworth Street Collective Neighbourhood Handbook
http://vc.conscious-choices.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Ainsworth-Sust-Collective-Handbook-2-10-.pdf You can learn more about their story here: http://ouvcommunityoutreach.org/docs/other/ch_5_ainsworth.pdf

Sangudo Investment Co-op.
http://communityrenewal.ca/i4gateway007-turn-around

Tsouke First Nation.
http://www.tsoukenation.com/

City of Seattle Department of Neighbourhoods PACE Program.
http://clerk.seattle.gov/~public/meetingrecords/2012/parks20120405_4a.pdf