

## Background

Green buildings are buildings that require less energy to operate, contribute fewer emissions to the environment, conserve water, generate less solid waste, and provide more comfortable and productive environments for their inhabitants.

The advancement of green building practices was identified at the RDN Saturday, April 3, 2004 Sustainability Workshop<sup>1</sup> as one of the possible ways of making the region a more sustainable place to live.

Since the initial Green Building Action Plan was developed in February of 2007, considerable work has been completed. This updated plan strengthens existing and presents new direction for green building research and development in the Regional District of Nanaimo.

## Goal

***To facilitate the development of green buildings in the Regional District of Nanaimo.***

## Objectives

The objectives are:

- to maintain and enhance RDN staff and elected official awareness and knowledge about green buildings;
- to improve performance of RDN facilities
- to develop tools and policies that encourage the adoption of green building practices in the community;
- to build partnerships to advance green building practices in the region;
- to inform residents about the benefits of green building practices and ways to incorporate green building technology into existing and new buildings in the region;
- to inform the development and construction industry active in the region about green building theory and practice, the benefits of green building practices and ways to incorporate green building technology into existing and new buildings in the region;
- to provide research to support green building principles and practices in the region.

<sup>1</sup> The Sustainability Workshop was conducted as a part of the Sustainability Project that the Regional District is currently undertaking. The Sustainability Project is being conducted to assess the region's progress towards sustainability, to make residents aware of the region's progress towards sustainability and to provide more and better opportunities to involve residents of the region in that assessment.

## Actions

### 1. Develop Green Building Policies and Guidelines

- a) The RDN will develop green building design and construction guidelines for corporate construction and renovation projects. Areas to be considered in these guidelines could include but are not limited to:
  - Erosion and sedimentation control;
  - Construction waste management;
  - Energy efficient and low carbon intensity design; and
  - Water conservation.
- b) The RDN will develop operations guidelines for existing facilities. Areas to be considered in these guidelines could include but are not limited to:
  - Continuous building performance optimization;
  - Energy conservation and carbon neutrality;
  - Low-impact exterior maintenance;
  - Indoor environmental quality management; and
  - Green housekeeping
- c) The RDN will consider approval of a resolution to encourage private sector development and construction companies that do business in the region to become informed about green buildings, to incorporate green building theory and practice into their projects, and to commit to greening current and future building construction projects.

### 2. Build Partnerships

- a) The RDN will establish and maintain corporate membership in the Canada Green Building Council and maintain at least one key staff member as an individual member of the Cascadia Region Green Building Council.
- b) The RDN will collaborate with municipalities, regional governments and other organizations to share information, and develop tools, policies and other materials that facilitate the development of green buildings in the region.
- c) The RDN will work with member municipalities to develop and implement policies concerning green building operations practices for existing buildings.

### 3. Undertake Outreach and Educational Activities

- a) The RDN will continue outreach and educational activities about green buildings for residents. The purpose of these activities is to inspire residents to take actions, to provide information on the latest development of green buildings in the region and to provide general information about:
  - the defining characteristics of a green building;
  - the similarities and differences between green buildings and conventional buildings;
  - how green buildings contribute to the sustainability of the region;
  - tips for constructing a new green home (i.e. methods of reducing operational energy requirements, reducing emissions to the environment, reducing water consumption, reducing solid waste generation, creating a healthier indoor environment);
  - tips for renovating existing homes to make them greener (i.e. methods of reducing operational energy requirements, reducing emissions to the environment, reducing water consumption, reducing solid waste generation, creating a healthier indoor environment).

- b) The RDN will solicit ideas from the public on local green building priorities to ensure that regional direction meets the needs, desires and expectations of regional residents.
- c) The RDN will undertake ongoing outreach and educational activities about green buildings for the local building industry. The purpose of the educational activities is to provide technical information about:
  - the defining characteristics of a green building;
  - the similarities and differences between green buildings and conventional buildings;
  - how green buildings contribute to the sustainability of the region;
  - green building rating systems and certification processes;
  - Specific strategies to address issues relevant to local and regional sustainability priorities.

#### **4. Develop Educational Materials and Practical Toolkits**

- a) The RDN will produce educational materials and online tools about green buildings for residents. The purpose of the materials and tools is to provide information and practical assistance to interested residents about:
  - Benefits of green buildings
  - Green building incentives
  - Specific strategies to address issues relevant to local and regional sustainability priorities
  - Local resources and contact information

The materials and tools would be made available to the public on the RDN web site, at the RDN offices, and potentially in other public places, such as the offices of each RDN member municipality and local libraries.

- b) The RDN will produce educational materials and online tools about green buildings for building professionals. The purpose of the materials and tools is to provide information and practical assistance to interested building professionals about:
  - Benefits of green buildings
  - Green building incentives
  - Specific strategies to address issues relevant to local and regional sustainability priorities
  - Local resources and contact information

The materials and tools would be made available to interested professionals, companies, professional associations and their members through industry events, special workshops, the RDN web site and regional green building activities.

- c) The RDN will develop plans, training materials and tools on management of green buildings for RDN staff. The purpose is to provide information and practical assistance to RDN staff including but not limited to:
  - Facilitation of the Integrated Design Process (IDP) for capital projects;
  - Continuous building performance optimization and ongoing monitoring; and
  - Maintaining a healthy and productive workplace

#### **5. Conduct Research about Green Buildings**

- a) The RDN will consider commissioning a report to identify ways of making the existing residential housing stock greener.
- b) The RDN will consider conducting a study to establish Development Permit Areas for green building and passive design as recommended in the report: *Overcoming Barriers to Green Buildings in the RDN*.

## 6. Reduce Regulatory Barriers and Provide Incentives for Green Buildings

- a) RDN staff will review RDN existing building bylaws and planning regulations, and adapt best practices from elsewhere to streamline the development process and reduce regulatory barriers to green building in the region.
- b) The RDN will take an incremental approach to developing a green building incentive program to encourage the construction of new green buildings and the renovation of existing buildings to a green building standard. Incentives could include free green building consultations with staff for development permit applicants, expedited permitting to “fast-track” green buildings, adjusted fees and charges that create financial incentives to develop green buildings, and density bonuses for green building developments.

## 7. Participate in Complementary Initiatives

- a) The RDN will continue to participate in the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Partners for Climate Protection Program.  
  
As a part of this program the RDN is presently compiling an inventory of greenhouse gas emissions in the region, developing targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions in the region, and developing a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region.
- b) The RDN will fulfill its commitment to the Provincial Climate Action Charter by:
  - Being carbon neutral in respect to its operations by 2012;
  - Measuring and reporting on the region's GHG emissions;
  - Creating complete, compact, more energy efficient rural and urban communities.
- c) The RDN will update its Corporate Climate Change Plan to reflect carbon neutral operations prior to 2012.
- d) The RDN will partner with member municipalities to promote the use of renewable energy in the region. As a SolarBC Solar Community, the RDN and member municipalities will promote the use of solar hot water systems on buildings.

## Budget

The RDN Board will consider the allocation of funds to implement selected components of the Action Plan as a part of the budget approval process for each year.

The estimated range of cost for each action item ranges between minimal cost and up to \$30,000.

## Timeline

The RDN Board will consider undertaking one or more action items on an annual basis, as a part of the budgetary process for each year.