



# **District of Vanderhoof**

Summary report of

## **Strategic Planning Session**

07/08 January 2012

Facilitated by

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*Strategic Management Consulting*

## *Overview*

Strategic Planning is the process of developing high level plans that define an organisation's direction. The District of Vanderhoof's Mayor and Council provide leadership to the community in defining the overall direction for community development. Municipal staff and other stakeholders are responsible for effective action planning and implementation of those plans. Overall responsibility for the plan rests with Mayor and Council and responsibility for implementation rests with senior administration under the direction of the CAO. In turn, the CAO is accountable to Mayor and Council. The strategic planning session defines the overall direction that Council would like to proceed in. Specific action planning, resourcing and time lines will need to be determined in a separate process.

## *Participants*

Mayor Gerry Thiessen  
Councillor Darren Carpenter  
Councillor Brian Frenkel  
Councillor Louise Levy  
Councillor Steve Little  
Councillor Kevin Moutray  
Councillor Ken Young

Joe Ukryn, Chief Administrative Officer  
Tom Clement, Deputy Administrator

## *Process*

The purpose of the January 2012 strategic planning session is for the newly elected Mayor and Council to set direction for the community in those areas where Council has a responsibility. In order to plan for the future we need to know at least three things: where we want to go; where we are now; and how we can get to where we want to go. This strategic plan utilises a theme approach, allocating council responsibilities to four themes: environmental sustainability, social and cultural development, economic development, and governance<sup>1</sup>.

As an initial step, participants identified the interests and responsibilities that council has an interest in planning for. These were then allocated among the four key themes. Some interests and responsibilities were seen to belong in more than one theme area and participants allowed for flexibility in planning as a result.

For each theme area, participants described their vision for the District of Vanderhoof 5 years from now, reviewed the current situation for each of those visions, and determined what is needed to move towards the identified vision over the next 3 years.

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<sup>1</sup> **Environmental Sustainability** might include: planning (OCP and zoning), climate change goals, LEED, recycling.  
**Social and Cultural Development** might include: arts and heritage, library, recreation facilities.  
**Economic Development** might include: diversification, business retention, investment incentives, tourism.  
**Governance** might include: local services, budgeting, stakeholder communication, internal communication.

# Environmental Sustainability

## Vision

Vanderhoof is an accessible community that adapts to community needs, is senior friendly, has local transportation options and has services and commerce concentrated in the downtown area. The community is an environmental leader supporting climate change adaptation, reduced carbon output and encouraging waste reduction and recycling.

## Current Situation

The District of Vanderhoof has gone a long way to make public buildings and facilities more accessible. The stock of accessible housing is less than current and forecast future demand. Development of smaller lot sizes allowing higher density and infill is not fully supported through existing bylaws. There are few current pressures on downtown development and Council is sensitive to the potential for disparate commercial development outside of the downtown area. There are no local public transportation options.

The District has met the planning requirements of Bill 27 and there is need to focus on implementation. Municipal carbon emissions have been reduced and the District is well on the way to carbon neutral operations. Recycling options in Vanderhoof are limited with scattered locations and varying hours of operation.

Highways into and through Vanderhoof are facing increasing traffic loads and there is significant concern about the safety of current highway design and capacity. Highway 27 is experiencing increased heavy industrial traffic and Highway 16 has been the site of numerous traffic accidents and incidents.

## Strategies

- Increase seniors' housing in the community
- Continue to incorporate accessibility in new capital projects and new developments
- Establish a development permit area
- Advocate for rural-specific brownfield redevelopment standards
- Promote the development of public transportation in Vanderhoof
- Encourage climate change adaptation in planning processes
- Continue to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from municipal operations
- Encourage recycling in the community
- Communicate environmental leadership plans and results to the community
- Advocate for implementation of a sturgeon recovery facility

*Measurable Actions:*

- Review and revise the District of Vanderhoof Official Community Plan by 31 December 2012
- Review and revise the District of Vanderhoof zoning bylaw to reflect the new Official Community Plan by 31 March 2013
- Reduce net new CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from municipal operations to zero by 31 December 2012
- Set a community garbage reduction target by 30 June 2012

## Social and Cultural Development

### Vision

Vanderhoof is a vibrant, healthy, safe and welcoming community that people want to call home. The community is a social and cultural sub-hub for the region.

### Current Situation

The District of Vanderhoof has great parks, trails and sports facilities but there is an emerging challenge with maintaining non-municipal operated cultural and recreation facilities on municipal land. The community has excellent health services. At the same time, there are challenges with an aging hospital infrastructure and shortages in some health-care occupations.

There are limited venues for community groups and most are available through multi-use agreements with the library, school and some private facilities. Storage for user-groups' equipment is a concern. Vanderhoof does not have a public use community centre, swimming pool or community arts centre.

Vanderhoof suffers from a very high ratio of case load to RCMP members, existing court services are overwhelmed by the current court case load and participation in the Community Watch program appears to be declining. Overall, there is a decline in volunteerism in the community.

Vanderhoof residents have limited opportunities for post-secondary education and training delivered in the community.

### Strategies

- Maintain and enhance municipal recreation parks and trails
- Develop a policy for agreements with all user groups
- Continue to influence and support local health initiatives
- Advocate for equitable use of local hospital board funds
- Work towards a full complement of RCMP officers (as previously agreed upon through dialogue with senior RCMP)
- Actively pursue community safety initiatives
- Continue to support community volunteer groups and initiatives

- Continue to support the work of the Vanderhoof Community Centre Committee and respond to recommendations
- Continue to advocate for and support the work of the Pool Committee and respond to recommendations
- Develop an action plan for approaching the pool referendum
- Advocate and support the Nechako Valley post-secondary education working group to enhance local delivery of post secondary education and training

*Measurable Actions:*

- Ensure that all user groups have agreements with the District of Vanderhoof by 31 March 2013
- The Pool Committee will report out to council before 20 February 2012
- Review and respond to recommendations of the Pool Committee by 20 February 2012

## Economic Development

### Vision

Vanderhoof has a healthy, proactive diversified economy that is ready to take advantage of new and evolving market developments.

### Current Situation

Vanderhoof has a reasonably diversified economy in which the forest sector plays an important role. The community has an adequate range of retail and service businesses with some significant success stories. The business community tends to be innovative and the community is already a sub-hub in some markets. Vanderhoof has the information and supports that make the community business friendly.

There are tangible investment opportunities in the community and the District has developed the strategies needed for economic development and growth. Current resourcing tends to result in reactive business attraction activities and implementation of existing economic development strategies needs some more focus. Tourism is reasonably stable within the region but Vanderhoof no longer has marquee events that attract locals and tourists alike. There have been positive developments at the airport allowing for business expansion and development.

Brownfields within the community are a barrier to development and Highway 16 through the community is still an eye-sore. Limits on 3-phase electrical power present a significant challenge to new industrial development. Businesses are facing difficulties in recruiting professionals and skilled labour.

The province and Rio Tinto Alcan exercise external control over flows on the Nechako river. The community is challenged in that it does not have access to the Nechako Environmental Enhancement Fund.

### Strategies

- Ensure resources are in place for economic development
- Develop an approach to business attraction
- Continue to implement the business retention plan
- Promote tourism and provide tourist information for Vanderhoof
- Actively develop and market local events
- Continue to explore the feasibility of a local Destination Marketing Organisation
- Promote the community's amenities and attractions
- Work collaboratively to attract skilled trades and professionals to Vanderhoof
- Develop a policy on funding agreements
- Pursue improvements in 3-phase electricity supply

- Work with the North Central Local Government Association to address rural brownfield issues
- Develop a local brownfields utilisation strategy
- Develop a plan to deal with derelict buildings and properties
- Continue to implement the airport development strategy
- Persistent advocacy on flood mitigation
- Work to access funding through the Nechako Environmental Enhancement Fund

*Measurable Actions:*

- Develop and begin implementation of a recruitment and community promotion plan by 30 November 2012
- Complete a report on the feasibility of, and funding options for, a local Destination Marketing Organisation by 31 August 2012
- Develop options for location and operation of the tourism information centre by 31 January 2013
- Develop an action plan to implement the flood mitigation strategy by 30 January 2012
- Develop a position paper on what the District of Vanderhoof needs from NEEF by 30 April 2012 and submit to the NEEF committee by 31 May 2012

## **Governance**

### **Vision**

The District of Vanderhoof has an open and transparent government that operates on sound business principles and balances services that meet community needs with equitable taxation. The District has water and sewer infrastructure that meets the need of the entire community, protective services that are adequately funded and is properly prepared to respond effectively to emergencies. The District has enforceable and effective bylaws. Vanderhoof has a municipal office that reflects community aspirations and pride and utilises appropriate technology in municipal operations. The District has good relations with its neighbours.

### **Current Situation**

The District of Vanderhoof has an open and transparent government. The municipality has a balanced budget with tax rates generally changing at less than the rate of inflation. The District covers at least essential services but does not meet all community needs. The municipality is unable to act on bylaw enforcement. Vanderhoof faces an almost \$10 million infrastructure deficit – the investment needed to maintain and remedy current infrastructure.

There is an adequate water system in those areas that the district has a responsibility to service. For historical reasons, the District of Vanderhoof is not required to service all areas within District boundaries. Fire protection services meet community needs while the level of policing services does not reflect the need in the community. The District has very nearly completed an emergency plan and has the resources to respond. There is an emerging need for storage and facilities with respect to emergency services.

The District municipal office is very dated and does not reflect community aspirations and pride. Technology is being effectively used for municipal operations and Council operations could benefit from some technical improvements.

### **Strategies**

- Continue to improve communication of municipal activities and issues with residents
- Continue to improve relationship with First Nations neighbours
- Review service and finance requirements to better reflect community needs
- Develop a plan to deal with the infrastructure deficit

- Work to ensure that the District office reflects community aspirations and pride
- Review options for technical improvements that will reduce the cost of conducting municipal business
- Implement policy change to ensure that bylaws are enforceable and effective

*Measurable Actions:*

- Develop and implement a communications plan by 31 March 2012
- Conduct a service review by 30 September 2012 to inform planning for the 2013 budget
- Draft, review and act on a ticketing bylaw by 18 January 2012
- Develop options for the modernisation of District offices by 31 December 2012

## Monitoring and Evaluation

Strategic planning becomes a wasted exercise if strategies and plans are not implemented, monitored, evaluated for success and plans revised as appropriate to respond to a changing environment.

**The District of Vanderhoof Mayor and Council are committed to act on these strategies and actions and actively monitor progress.**

Council will purposefully review progress towards the goals set out in this strategic plan at least once every 3 months. Where strategies do not yet have specific actions associated with them, Mayor and Council will ensure that progress is monitored over time, action plans are developed and the new targets are actively monitored and evaluated.