



Social Sustainability At UBC



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Social Sustainability

...is the mobilization of society, weaving individual and community interests together, towards an overall social betterment.

Vision Statement:

Together, the University of British Columbia, and all its community members will continue to build a strong university campus that serves as a model for social inclusiveness.

We know we have to 'sustain' something, we just need to uncover what it is people want to sustain.

Van Jones



	Concept Description	University Context
Basic Human Needs (individual capacity)	<p>In a sustainable community, citizens have access to primary human needs including food, shelter and safety. These needs are achieved by access to education, work and income; and must be attainable by all those that live in the community.</p>	<p>For UBC, students/staff must have access to housing, food and safety. Ensuring that all community members have an opportunity to work and earn a decent income.</p> <p>UBC must extend its educational access to all community members to ensure proper training and qualification for income exists.</p>
Leisure Time	<p>Recreational/leisure time must be available to all community members, outside of time spent achieving basic human needs. Leisure time could be anything from exercising and fitness to cultural activities and family time.</p> <p>It is also time spent developing personal characteristics and creativity. Such social developments test the challenges (social stress) and strengths (social innovation) of community and provide a roadmap towards social betterment. A community that can collectively manage leisure time will undoubtedly foster social integration.</p>	<p>Students must be able to pursue additional interests, outside of the educational curriculum. Ensuring students balance work/life will create happier, healthier students.</p>
Community Accountability	<p>Accountability connects individual and community relationships through recognition of human rights and a common interest for individual responsibility. It holds community members accountable for their actions, and by doing so, provides groundwork for common interests to be achieved.</p> <p>It is important for social sustainability because it ensures each member acts accordingly to how the community anticipates individuals to act. Without accountability, wide discrepancies of behavior and interaction would exist. In communities where accountability is not enforced, antisocial behavior such as property damage, violence and community disruption</p>	<p>Students/staff are accountable for their actions and follow the common interest of those currently existing within the area of UBC.</p> <p>For a university, it is significantly important to communicate the level of accountability to students. The campus welcomes new students annually and must ensure they understand the level of accountability.</p>
Affordability	<p>Affordability is a concept of equity, but aims to assure the balance of income and leisure. A socially sustainable community would seek to create affordable solutions for living and commuting within a social setting. Emphasis is placed on affordable housing and transportation in any community.</p>	<p>Affordability in a university context means students can afford the cost of living, along with the cost of tuition. No 'potential' student is discouraged from pursuing a degree because of affordability.</p>
Health & Safety	<p>Through a respected level of trust, community members feel safe and comfortable in their community and living arrangements.</p> <p>Access to a clean environment (air, landscape) that provides healthy options for living (exercise, food) enhances health. People have local access to health-care, that is responsive to medical issues.</p>	<p>Safety among citizens on campus is promoted through accountability</p> <p>Campus grounds are clean and promotion of air quality is maintained. Universities provide sufficient health-care for students and citizens, while promoting healthy lifestyles.</p>

Concept Description**University Context**

Adaptability

Social sustainability requires concepts that fit with coexisting cultures today, but may change overtime with shifting values. Indicators for social sustainability must be harmonious with cultural evolution, reflecting current values.

University culture shifts with each new cohort, including residents living in the campus area. University policies and procedures must also be dynamic and responsive to these changes.

Equality

Providing people with equal access to equal opportunities ensures equality within a given community. Community members help each other and care for one another.

Campus participants treat each other with equal care and promote equal access to campus resources.

Capitalism is a major breakdown of social equality by promoting the "have's" and "have not's." In a socially sustainable community, behaviors regarding capitalism are consistent with community goals. Members live within their own means, while ensuring other members are equally satisfied.

Social Infrastructure

Social infrastructure is important to achieving social sustainability by utilizing the built environment that surrounds the community. In almost all parts of the world infrastructure determines our social interactions and accessibility. There is a difference in community feel between a spatially fragmented community and a tightly centered community. For example, rural communities tend to be widely fragmented and often lend themselves to less interaction. Whereas a neighborhood in a tightly centered urban setting may have many common interactions among it's citizens and aid in promoting many of the key concepts of sustainability.

Campus buildings allow for interaction among students and promote transportation from areas outside of the community boundaries.

Accessibility to the university is equally achievable by all groups of society, and no discrimination exists.

Accessibility is another widely cited sustainable tool. By providing infrastructure that promotes accessibility (transportation or access) to all diverse groups in the community, in the most efficient way possible, will enhance quality of life and ensure people are treated equally.

Social Inclusion

Appearing in almost all the literature on social sustainability, inclusion (or togetherness) reflects an integrated community where each person participates in community on-goings. It occurs through collaborative decision-making and processes that center on "the community."

Campus residents (students, staff, homeowners) are included in campus plans, providing interests and requests.

Social inclusion is essential because it brings together all the other concepts of social sustainability. It does so, not by demanding citizens become more inclusive, but by making them part of the process. This sense of inclusion among the community encourages a positive response to social sustainability, as they have shaped their own community.

An important part of university inclusion is participation in campus life. No member is excluded from participating in

Education

Education provides opportunities for social advancement. It allows a flow of information for what works for certain community, and what doesn't, so that others can learn from mistakes. Education, at its highest level, provides a framework for citizens to get engaged with surrounding challenges and develop innovative solutions to local problems.

Universities are in business to provide education to students. A socially sustainable university would ensure programs exist for any member of society and that these programs are easily accessible.

With global issues surrounding the environment, there is an emerging role in education to provide citizens with the knowledge and motivation to transform our current model of the global citizen. As these concerns continue, the concepts of social sustainability will undoubtedly be challenged. New social norms and values will flourish and education will provide the community with new understandings of how a world will work and how social interactions will take place.

Being a global leader in education on current issues would provide the greatest level of opportunities for graduates.

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Performance Goals

Quality of life Ensure the balance of individual quality of life is achieved.

Each citizen in a social context must first achieve a desired level of quality of life before a broad level of social sustainability can exist. This performance goal recognizes the individual capacity of social sustainability, promoting self-wellbeing. A socially sustainable university would ensure that each participatory citizen meets their primary human needs without sacrificing time away from exploring and developing ones creative self. As citizens look to individual betterment and satisfaction, they contribute towards an equally enhanced community.

Social Cohesiveness Create a harmonious atmosphere, where interaction among diverse community members is fostered to promote togetherness and build trust.

Social cohesion represents the relative ease to which people unite and collaborate together, promoting community. This goal encompasses many physical and social attributes that relate to UBC. Creating better social areas and streamlining pedestrian flow would satisfy the physical requirement. Also, reducing spatial fragmentation of campus buildings would enhance community atmosphere. Promoting social events and programs aimed towards community building will breed community participation and strengthen cooperation. A fundamental attribute to social cohesiveness is that it requires open dialogue between community members and stakeholders, promoting shared decision-making.

Accessibility Provide open and easy access for community members to engage and participate in all community offerings.

Equal access to equal opportunities is mandatory for social sustainability to exist. Affordability is a component that universities need to dramatically overhaul, to provide education to anyone seeking personal betterment. Furthermore, transportation has become a major topic of accessibility, especially for UBC. For people to work, live and study on campus, transportation must be able to prove efficient means of travel.

Health & Wellbeing Enhance physical, social and mental wellbeing of all community members.

Health and Wellbeing ensures citizens have access to reliable health-care, while promoting health awareness and fitness initiatives. A healthy community is one that is committed to a clean and safe environment for all participants. It is enhanced through community support for one another and a valued understanding of human rights and responsibilities.

Education Be the leader in educational opportunities that advance current issues

Education is essential to achieving social sustainability by providing knowledge to coexist with diverse groups of citizens and manage dynamic social challenges. It acts as a transformative tool for society to advance and create opportunities that promote betterment. It achieves it's objective for social advancement when the knowledge created is relevant to the issues facing the local community.



Bibliography

Stren, R. & Polese, M. The Social Sustainability of Cities. Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

The authors compared social sustainability to a Vienna coffeehouse, which described a social interaction among a diverse crowd of people. The imagery of a packed coffeehouse, filled with separate conversations, provided an underground concept of what social sustainability would look like on campus. This book discussed the importance of cultural evolution and how sustainability must be constantly changing. It mentioned cohesiveness, and how a city can act as an incubator of social integration by limiting spatial fragmentation. A very simply concept, but nonetheless relevant to maintaining closeness of individuals to advance the community feel.

Ministry for the Environment. Gov't towards sustainable practises. Retrieved January 28, 2009, from <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/issues/sustainable-industry/govt3/topic-areas/social-sustainability/index.html>

Provided a broad overview of social sustainability in New Zealand with emphasis on basic human needs. This site makes reference to government offices and how sustainability can exist in a corporate setting. Interestingly, the government applies a focus on health, stating food and exercise as contributing indicators. My understanding of New Zealand is that youth obesity rates have increased dramatically over the past years, possibly pushing this to the front of the social agenda.

Jones, V. (2008, November 11). [Internet television series episode] Treehugger Radio: The Green Collar Economy. Toronto: Apple Canada.

Van Jones is an advocate of the green economy and has written many books. His weekly podcast updates provide remarkable evidence of an underground social movement just waiting to explode. Jones describes a situation where social sustainability must incorporate concepts around the new economy and a new way of thinking. Making a connection between social sustainability and environmental sustainability confirms that they are closely related. This is a relatively new area of thought and Jones is of the few that examines this topic.

London Government, Virtuous cycle thinking. Retrieved January 29, 2009, from <http://www.londonsdc.org/>

This website discussed two important areas of social sustainability. One was closely related to basic human needs, by developing a "living wage," London was able to monitor and ensure that citizens achieved the basics. Secondly, making sure that sustainable concepts were passed on to others to develop is the main focus for this framework.

Environment Canada. (1996). The state of the environment. Retrieved January 27, 2009, from <http://www.ec.gc.ca/soer-ree/English/SOER/1996report/Doc/1-5-2-6-4-1.cfm>.

Though quite dated, this document gave an understanding of how socially unsustainable practices can contribute to anti-social behavior. Adaptability was also discussed in that we live in a constant changing world and that change must always be a part of social sustainability.

University of Technology Sydney. (2008, September 22). Institute for Sustainable Futures. Retrieved January 28, 2009, from <http://www.isf.uts.edu.au/>

"A sustainable future is one that is just, equitable, inclusive and democratic and delivers a quality of life for current and future generations." The institute discusses how citizen participation is crucial to social acceptance and mentions justice. Justice is reviewed through a process called impact assessment, where fairness, equity and human rights are promoted. A key concept is that dimensions of sustainability need equal attention and that these dimensions must be taken together, not separate.

Vancouver City Council. (2004, December 14). Southeast False Creek Official Development Plan. Retrieved January 27, 2009, from <http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20050301/ph3.htm>

The False Creek development plan consists of its own set of social sustainability objectives. Separating the community and individual capacities of social sustainability reveals four areas of measurement: equity, interaction, security and adoptability. A key area of interest is placed on interaction, and how including members of the community in planning helps create a better developed project.

Strathcona County. (2007, March 27). Social Sustainable Framework. Retrieved January 24, 2009, from <http://www.strathcona.ab.ca/Strathcona/Departments/Family+and+Community+Services/hiddenpages+linked+to+from+weekly+notices/Social+Sustainability+Framework.htm>

This framework provided the most comprehensive outline of what a socially sustainable community would look like. Many of the concepts from all the other sources have been summarized in this framework, which reflects the redundancy in social sustainability. The 4 pillars of social inclusion, social responsibility, community connectedness, and health and wellbeing, provided a map that assisted me in developing areas to create goals for UBC. However, a weakness of this framework was that social inclusion and community connectedness were relatively the same thing. Strathcona County bridges the gap between individual and community sustainability by discussing the importance individuals play to the greater community.

VANOC. (2007). Sustainability Report. Retrieved January 24, 2009 from, <http://www.vancouver2010.com/dl/00/35/13/-/35136/prop=data/tzomid/35136.pdf>

VANOC and Ann Duffy both reveal the strategies of social inclusion that connect their operations with community members. The mandate to make these Olympic Games an educational advancement for disadvantaged groups has provided opportunities for many people.

UBC. (March 2006). Inspirations and Aspirations. Retrieved January 13, 2009 from, http://www.sustain.ubc.ca/pdfs/ia/51060_ubc_sus_book_rv1.pdf

Inspirations and Aspirations gave me background information on where the Universities weakness existed and was referred to throughout this report.

