

REPORT: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES WORKSHOP

Tantramar 2040: Issues & Opportunities Workshop

Report Outline

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1.0 Introduction of Tantramar 2040

Purpose

Tantramar 2040 is an initiative to work toward a sustainable future using a lens that considers environmental, economic, and social/cultural challenges and opportunities. Partnering communities include the Town of Sackville, and Villages of Dorchester, Memramcook and Port Elgin. This process will build on local initiatives and focus on common topics that can be best addressed as a region.

Background

EOS Eco-Energy co-hosted the *Adaptation & Actions Conference* in March of 2009. The conference was a success with over 100 participants and representation from 15 municipalities in Atlantic Canada. During the final discussion, participants identified the need to develop sustainability plans within municipalities and at the regional level. As a result, EOS submitted proposals to its member municipalities to develop a regional sustainability plan. The Town of Sackville and the Villages of Dorchester, Memramcook, and Port Elgin agreed to work collaboratively on a sustainability plan for the Tantramar region. EOS is coordinating the Tantramar 2040 initiative, in partnership with the Tantramar Planning District Commission.

Funding

EOS Eco-Energy has received funding from the Rural Secretariat and the New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund to coordinate the Tantramar 2040 initiative.

1.1 Steering Committee

A Steering Committee was struck to ensure that a quality ICSP representing community interests is produced as required to meet funding deadlines. Members of the Steering Committee report to their respective Councils, associations or organizations, and represent the following entities:

Town of Sackville
Village of Memramcook
Village of Port Elgin
Village of Dorchester
Fort Folly First Nation
Greater Sackville Chamber of Commerce
Enterprise South East
Tantramar Planning District Commission
Beaubassin Planning Commission
EOS Eco-Energy

1.2 Mission Statement

The Steering Committee crafted a mission statement to reflect the Tantramar 2040 process.

“Tantramar 2040 will gather the resources and imaginations of its communities to plan and take action on sustainability, ensuring the region’s collective environmental, economic, and socio-cultural wellbeing.”

2.0 Workshop #1: Issues and Opportunities

The purpose of the first workshop was to explore sustainability topics in the Tantramar region focusing on economic, environmental and social/cultural priorities.

The workshop was held at the Cape Jourimain Nature Centre, which represents an example of a sustainable facility. The Iceboat Landing Restaurant at Cape Jourimain Nature Centre prides itself in offering a menu with items that are mostly local and organic, when possible. Although the location was remote for some of the participants, the organizers did make an effort to have participants carpool to and from the workshop. Subsequent workshops will be held at other locations in the Tantramar region.

2.1 Marketing

The workshop was open to the public, and invitations were distributed to individuals with knowledge or a keen interest in key areas of sustainability. An article in the Sackville Tribune highlighted the need for public involvement in the Issues & Opportunities workshop. Workshop advertisements were posted on the EOS Eco-Energy website, New Brunswick Environmental Network website, Town of Sackville online events calendar, Dorchester newsletter, and Le Lien newsletter in Memramcook. An email was also sent for distribution to various networks.

2.2 Process

The first workshop used Open Space Technology (OST) to identify and then prioritize issues/opportunities for discussion purposes. OST follows these basic rules:

- 1) Whoever comes are the right people,
- 2) Whatever happens is the only thing that could have,
- 3) When it starts is the right time,
- 4) When it’s over it's over.

The workshop began with a brief introduction on sustainability and the Tantramar 2040 initiative by the facilitators. Participants were then asked to use Post-Its to identify their concerns or where they thought there could be opportunities for collaboration in the region— one topic per Post-It. The group then broke for a shared meal, while the facilitators grouped the brainstorming Post-It notes in broad categories. After dinner, participants used dot-mocracy to identify the discussion priorities for the evening. Each participant was given 6 dots to use as a vote for the 20

issues that were identified. The top 7 topics, which received the greatest number of dots, were discussion priorities for the evening. Participants were welcomed to join any of the 7 groups to discuss the topic. There was a note-taker in each group.

In Open Space, there is the ‘Law of Two Feet’, which means:

If you find yourself in a situation where you are neither learning nor contributing, move to somewhere you can.

In other words, participants were welcomed to come and go between groups as they felt appropriate. There were no timed discussions or requirement to move to any specific group. The informal atmosphere of the Open Space model allowed for idea sharing in a very fluid environment which was generally well-received by participants.

3.0 Workshop Results

Thirty-five participants attended the workshop. Based on the feedback survey (19 respondents in total) following the workshop, the majority of respondents agreed that the workshop met the objective of bringing together people from Tantramar to identify opportunities for collaboration on issues of sustainability. All responses indicated that the bilingual nature of the presentation was acceptable. Participants enjoyed the workshop layout with a brief introduction, followed by dinner. Survey respondents complimented the Open Space Technology method and appreciated the opportunity to provide their thoughts in a small group setting. To better prepare participants for future workshops, it has been suggested that the facilitators provide an agenda in advance. Also, there were a few comments about the remote location of the Cape Jourimain Nature Centre, which are addressed in section 2.0. The majority of survey respondents felt that all of the important issues in Tantramar were identified and discussed during the workshop. Additional suggestions included addressing the rural/urban split within Tantramar and affordable housing for students and low income, all of which can be discussed under other main headings (see Section 3.1).

3.1 Brainstorming Priorities

Participants were asked to use Post-Its to identify their concerns or where they thought there could be opportunities for collaboration in the region— one topic per Post-It. The list of suggestions is below:

Sustainable & Renewable Energy
Small-Scale Sustainable Energy Production
Peak Oil Strategy
Energy Policy on Gas Exploration
Food Security
Local Food
Organic Farms
Community Kitchens
Transportation (Rural & Urban Link)

Infrastructure (design) & Spaces
Climate Change Adaptation
Regional Land-Use Planning
Green Zoning Laws
Sea Level Rise/ Coastal Erosion
Prison & Rehabilitation
Youth (out migration, education)
Good Governance and Decision-Making
Value of Arts & Culture

Wildlife Conservation
Safe/ Affordable Housing
Respecting Aboriginal & Treaty Rights
Employment Opportunities
Local Business Development
Local Investment
Revitalize Rural Economy
Support: Special Populations (Financial/ Programs)
Early Child Development
Involvement of Seniors in Community

Active Living
Community Family Centres
Watershed Protection
Clean/ Safe Water
Health Care
Urban Forestry
Forestry Regulation
Community-Based Schools

3.2 7 Priority Topics: Small Group Discussions

The facilitators grouped the brainstorming items into broad categories. Then, using dot-mocracy, the following seven topics* were identified as a top priority for discussion during the workshop:

- Energy
- Food
- Water
- Social Support
- Climate Change Adaptation
- Local Business Development
- Community-Based Education

*Note: Although the topics are recognized as interconnected, in the sense that you cannot talk about one without addressing others, topics were divided for the purpose of group discussions.

The following notes on each topic highlight the discussion sessions where participants talked about sustainable alternatives or responses to the priorities identified.

Energy

- Solar subsidy
- Tie-in tariffs through regional marketing board
- More ambitious community energy policies - provincial
- Bio-mass alternatives (i.e., hay)
- To offset costs of energy, have energy production rebate/return
 - Tie-in to the grid in a system where it's worthwhile to generate our own power
- Anticipate/plan for technology advancing exponentially
- If residents were shown the "true" cost of energy, would it change?
- Tidal (Fundy) - maybe more research and development required
- Considering that the person in charge be one with experience instead of a designated elected representative
- Tie-in to transportation
- The rural environment
- Help with the capital investment to aid individuals start energy generation
- Community energy

- Importing best practice techniques/technology and service from places abroad (i.e., Europe, Japan)
- Learning from places where energy costs more
- Incorporated in the building code?
- Standards - where CSA won't certify wind turbines
- Resource extraction → peak oil and the danger of looking for the next “clean” oil
- The hybrid/electric car, or towards less commuting/travel and decentralization
- Energy policies to be organized top-down

Food

- Atlantic Canada Organic Regional Network
- Local food available in local supermarkets
- Awareness of food distances and relation to energy, peak oil, oil shortages
- Fair wages for farmers
- Co-op food program: community of 20 families → 60 vegetables, chicken, eggs
- Local gardens, help from local gardening association, local gardening clubs
- Farmer's market → permanent infrastructure, mix crafts and food
- Eat seasonally
- Learning new kinds of vegetables, introducing diversity of foods
- Awareness of links to waste
- Awareness about junk food
- 100 mile dinners
- Shitake - new product
- Farm tours - helped by larger stores, tours to help with harvest
- Community education about cooking and preserving food
- Food bank in Sackville - food share model in Toronto, take inventory of staples and dry goods, food shares
- Statistics on: types of foods, where people come from
- Community garden - give training and allow people to garden if don't have land of their own, enhance system (Port Elgin)
- Rezoning - for growing own poultry (some restrictions because of smell, rats, and other concerns), livestock (where necessary), or “allowances”
- Michel Desjardins - backyard gardens need some flexibility in zoning
- Issue: further subdivision of land for agricultural use
- Increases in cost of land: waterfront/pastoral - need comprehensive regional plan for agricultural designated land (to preserve it) because the cost of land increases when zoned for subdivisions and the cost of clearing land is so great
- Supporting Community Supported Agriculture
- Celebration of local food dinners
- School tours of farms and cooking/preserving courses in schools
- Permanent market infrastructure for all communities
- Victory gardening
- Food summer camp for kids
- NS → regional root cellars
- Health concerns, social support food web. Institutional purchasing of healthy, local food.
- Port Elgin school food system (still have local folks cooking at school) and a farm-school partnership; Pilot project for the region's school food procurement
 - Speerville discount

- Local farms
- Mt. A environmental plan → Local = Tantramar region
- Community supported fishery
 - Regional storage for safe supply and seasonal surpluses

Water

- Fracking Gas Company, difficulty for community to put brakes on/have a say
- Civil disobedience will re-awaken the consciousness of the power we have
- Power is centralized. Decisions are made in Fredericton and Ottawa. We need to re-evaluate where stewardship responsibility lies
- Erosion of community involvement in the decisions that affect them
Forestry/Energy/Water
- 40 years from now: back to communal forest, Crown lands not provincial but regional (blanket policies don't work)
- Protection of watersheds - need to be policed/protected better, > 30m buffer
- Window of opportunity - end of newspapers/pulp companies will suffer
- Property rights will instill community empowerment in regards to the natural resources there
- Have water meters - pay to force people to conserve
- Awareness of cost of delivery vs. cost of water itself

Social Support

- Target seniors, adults and children with disabilities
- Special care home
- Group home
- A range of supported living options in group homes and apartments
- Vocational and prevocational programs
- Care farming
- Social development is on board funding programs in Tantramar
- Public transportation is in place and affordable (ex: shuttle multiple x per day from Cape Tormentine through Port Elgin, Aulac, Mt. Whatley, Sackville, Dorchester, Memramcook, Moncton)
- There is clean, safe, affordable housing, accessible to seniors and people with disabilities and low income
- Family Resource Centre is well developed and securely funded in a safe, clean, secure, central location
- Central downtown spaces for resource and activity centres and/or use spaces like churches and fund upgrades to existing spaces, store front spaces, etc., library, old fire station
- We have a Sackville commons (clubs, community services, activity centres, senior centres all get and share space)
- We have a walk-in clinic: days, nights, weekends, well-woman clinic
- Seniors are encouraged and assisted to volunteer in schools and other community organizations
- There is a centre for seniors who are living in the community... beyond seniors college but not ready for a nursing home
- All of our schools are community-based schools
- Social supports funding is in place and we know how to sustain it

Climate Change Adaptation

- Construction: coastal issues
- Regional scale
- Planning commission needs to regulate residential/commercial/industrial infrastructure policy
- Rainfall inundation → 2008 bridges/foundations fell out
- Regional prioritization left to Fredericton - LSDs are disadvantaged with towns
- Answer: Finn Report
- Provide tools for a regional approach
- Timetables/accountability for 2040
- Climate change groups exchange information through working groups
- Barrier - distance, innovation through technology
- Skype - video conference to lessen footprint
- Eco-homes within DESCOD design
- Raise standards within building code bylaws and subdivision bylaws

Local Business Development and Community-Based Education

- Good base to build upon - Mt. A, knowledge-based economy
- Recognition of nonprofits' contributions - the Commons shared to create synergies
- Small offices downtown and cheap rent as business incubators
- Teaming up with mentors
- Succession planning for businesses to maintain their place
- Inventory what there is already in the community to keep interest/success going (succession)
- Assist succession processes
- Local venture capital - CEDIF's
- Social enterprises
- Cooperatives, credit unions
- Carbon offset credits for forestry/woodlot owners
- LETS currencies, local currencies
- Sustainable, diverse agribusinesses
- New farmers growing food, making a living
- Marketing cooperatives for local foods
- Schools - starting plants and selling them
- A high school student on the Boards of local organizations
- Youth choose entrepreneurship from an early age
- Microcredit lending
- Economic literacy
- Buy local
- Basic needs met locally without gouging people
- Fish local markets
- Shared resources (like a collective kitchen to produce food for sale)
- Transportation (rural)
- Tourism
 - Farm experiences, fishing experiences
 - Hostels, cheaper accommodations
 - Nature tourism
 - Fitness/health camps/spas for families
- Build on interests like hockey, music, nature, business for tourism

- Guide services for natural settings
- Tours with nice accommodations/points of interest
- Canoe/kayaking
- Grass fed beef, healthier sustainable farming
- Decentralized renewable energy production
- Collaboration among businesses, rather than competition
- No 'dirty' tactics between businesses
- Businesses meet needs/ niches
- Return of taxes back into community to inspire new businesses
- Shopping for basic needs- meet 'spiritual' needs elsewhere
- Need to 'go-to-town' less frequently because can buy the basics in rural areas too... via small convenience stores (=less travel)
- Small local business directory

4.0 Synthesis of Ideas

Using a systems approach to sustainability, the Tantramar 2040 process focuses its work on the three pillars— economy, environment and socio-culture. A healthy environment provides the foundation for its people to create a healthy community upon which a thriving economy can develop (Figure 1).

Systems Approach to Sustainability

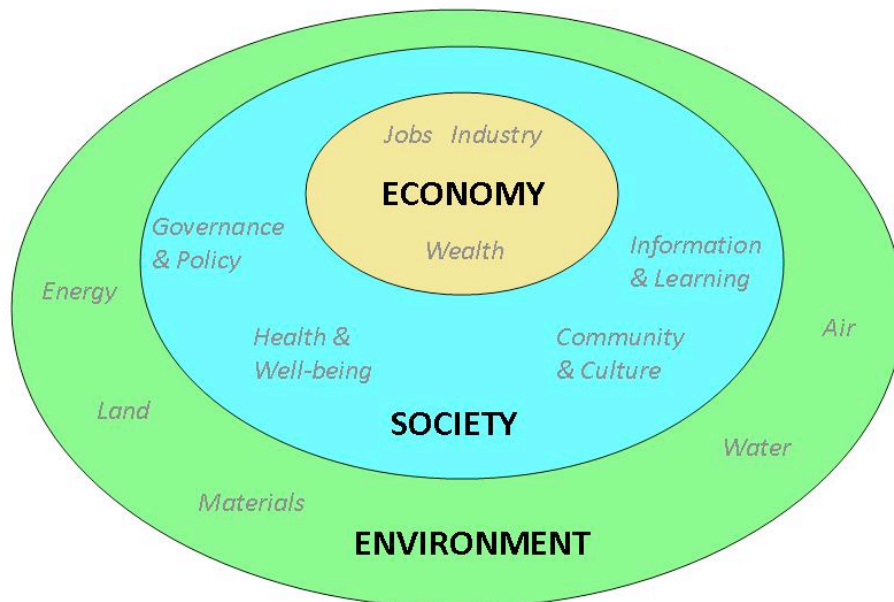


Figure 1. A systems approach to sustainability, where all three pillars are arranged as a nested hierarchy.

Tantramar 2040 will focus on sustainable opportunities that are regional in scope. It is often more cost-effective to address common issues as a region, where resources and expenses can be shared. Collaboration will be mutually beneficial since each individual entity might not otherwise be able to afford to take action.

4.1 Emergent Priority Themes

Based on feedback from the Issues & Opportunities workshop and municipal sustainability initiatives, a number of regional themes have emerged as being priorities, which could be best addressed at the regional level. Discussion topics identified at the Issues & Opportunities workshop helped to provide direction to the next level of work. An issue, such as climate change, is one that pervades many different topics and we see considerations for climate change adaptation and mitigation as being part and parcel of all of the emergent priority themes.

- 1) Energy - Objective is to find ways to meet regional energy needs in an efficient, affordable, sustainable and reliable way, while managing greenhouse gas emissions and air quality.
- 2) Food System - Objective is to ensure healthy, nutritious and sustainable food supply that maximizes opportunities to build the social, ecological, cultural and economic capital of the community.
- 3) Transportation - Objective is to safely move people, goods, and materials to, from and between communities in a more sustainable manner.
- 4) Solid Waste - Objective is to reduce production of waste, and meet the need for material disposal through efficient use and reuse of the most sustainable materials.
- 5) Education - Objective is to ground the communities' understanding of sustainability concepts within both formal and informal learning opportunities for all age groups.
- 6) Local Business Development - Objective is to create a strong regional economy and develop and maintain successful, resilient businesses that help move the region towards sustainability.
- 7) Water - Objective is to provide a dependable supply of high quality water in a way that maintains healthy aquatic environments and uses water efficiently.
- 8) Social Supports - Objective is to meet the health and social needs (including physical, mental, spiritual and emotional) of the residents of Tantramar.

Information on these items will be prepared for the upcoming workshop in November (details TBA). A detailed agenda and information will be provided to all interested participants prior to that time.