

Social Sustainability



Social well-being, including sense of community, social equity, and safety, is important, and can be fostered in part by good planning.

The built environment can foster a sense of community by having centres of activity where neighbours can meet both formally and informally. This includes such things as inviting streets and squares with active pedestrian life, as well as flexible community space both indoor and out for formal gathering. For example, urban agriculture often provides gathering spaces and purpose through a collective project for community groups.

A sense of place also contributes to the community, and hence to social sustainability. This can be created with distinctive architecture, open spaces, or preservation of links to a community's history. The Eau Claire chimney, preserved from earlier days is a good example of this.

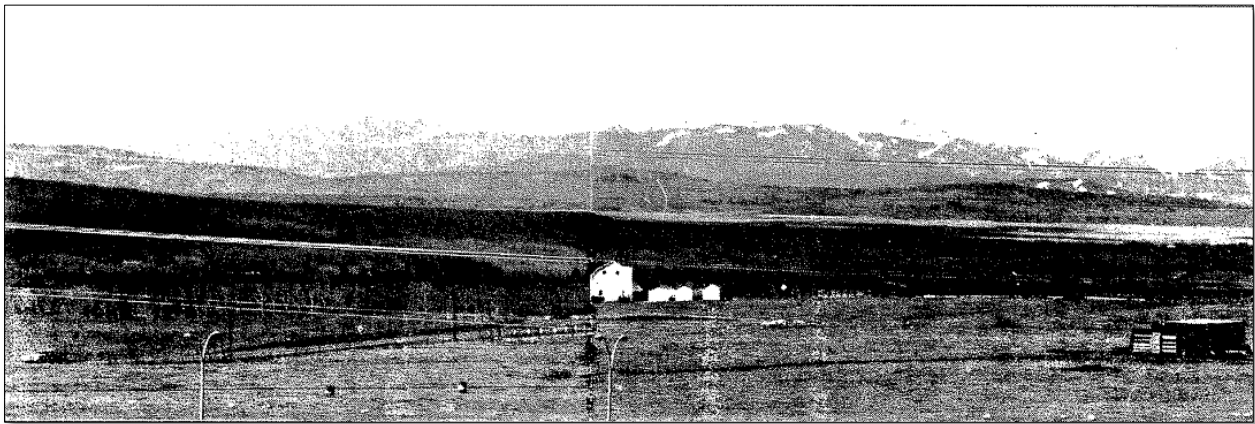


Figure 1: Old view of the Rockies from the knoll in Glamorgan (Glamorgan Glenbrook Design Brief, City of Calgary, 1971).

The built environment can foster safety by creating visible and active spaces where crime is less likely to occur. Buildings with well-used spaces oriented toward the street provide “eyes on the street” that can also improve safety.

The built environment can encourage healthier lifestyles by making walking and cycling more appealing. Increasing the share of transportation that is completed by cycling, walking, and public transit (which often includes walking) is important for this. Attractive and active streets can contribute to a community's walkability, as can connectivity and proximity between destinations. Providing space for recreational walking, cycling, and other activity is also important. Similarly, urban design techniques, as well as natural open space, can provide attractive and inviting spaces for residents to exercise.

Planning can also foster social sustainability with good processes, in which citizens are engaged, and governance is transparent and accountable. Neighbourhood groups and activities can contribute to the social links that can foster community strength. This strength can be important should the community need to exert political will.



Resources

Designing for Social Sustainability: <http://www.youngfoundation.org/publications/paper/design-social-sustainability-a-framework-creating-thriving-communities>

CARROT CITY Designing for Urban Agriculture (<http://www.ryerson.ca/carrotcity/city.html>)

Dig It Community Garden Guide: How Local Governments Can Support Community Gardens (<http://www.toolkit.bc.ca/resource/dig-it-community-garden-guide-how-local-governments-can-support-community-gardens>)

Transportation for America. Dangerous by Design (<http://t4america.org/docs/dbd2011/ca-dangerous-by-design.pdf>)

Emergency Response and Street Design (www.cnu.org/emergencyresponse)

Bikeability Checklist for Local Government (<http://sydney.edu.au/medicine/public-health/cpah/research/bike.php>)

Systematic pedestrian and cycling environmental scan (SPACES) instrument (<http://www.activelivingresearch.org/node/10617>)

Ped Shed Transportation Tech Sheet – Congress for the New Urbanism Process for Calculating Walkable Catchments (http://www.cnu.org/sites/www.cnu.org/files/CNU_Ped_Sheds.pdf)

Sources

Images: [1] North Carolina State Centre for Health Statistics <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/about/chai.html>

[2] City of Calgary Planning Department. (1971). Glamorgan Glenbrook Design Brief.



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