

## Kitchen Table Conversation Report

**Name of Group/Organization:** City of Lethbridge Planning Department

**Conversation Topic:** Environmental Resources

**Number of people in Conversation:** 7

**Date:** Sept 30, 2016

**Describe your Conversation:** On September 30, seven staff from the Planning Department met to discuss some of the main environmental challenges and opportunities in Lethbridge, as well as mitigation steps that could be taken to reduce our environmental impacts.

The conversation highlighted just how important interrelated environmental outcomes are with human activities, and in the growth and development of our City's urban footprint. It was also a positive conversation in that there were many mitigation steps identified that we can take as individuals and as Community Planners.

**Question 1:** What are the main environmental challenges in Lethbridge?

- Air quality
  - Emissions and their related health impacts (e.g., Asthma)
- Ignorance
  - People don't want to / can't often see the bigger picture
  - There is a disconnect between knowing the problem, knowing what to do about the problem, but not committing to action
    - People have too much hope that someone else will deal with the problem or the problem will simply go away... thus limiting action
- People purely evaluate economic ROIs
  - Someone needs to be the early adopter to bring the cost down
- Recycling
  - Many are not willing to do it
  - Trapped in a values-based argument—perhaps missing the bigger picture
- Water quality
  - Large precipitation events—stormwater goes straight into the river
    - We don't intercept water before it goes into the river
    - Good example of an intervention is the new U of L parking lot
  - We can manage water quantity with our current licenses
    - Can start to think about water conservation through gray water reuse / conservation programs
  - City park watering
    - There is a water management issue here sometimes
    - The technology to better manage park watering does exist
    - Park irrigation isn't metered—is this an opportunity?
  - There is a problem with commercial watering as well—watering needs to be managed better in some cases
- Sensitive habitat
  - E.g., cottonwood stands, rattlesnake habitat
  - Need to maintain intact

- Balance co-existence with human land uses
  - Make a decision and follow-through with it
- Data challenge: not enough data/info at the right time
- Urban forest
  - Need to plan for the future
  - Forest planted at roughly the same time
  - Disease management (e.g., European Elm Scale)

**Question 2:** What can we do as individuals to mitigate environmental impacts?

- Air
  - Drive less / use public transit
  - More fuel efficient vehicles
  - Burn less
  - Dollar-voting: consumer choice
    - Shop local to buy things with lower transportation “costs”
  - Health impacts of other pollutants (e.g., lead) have unknown health impacts
- Ignorance
  - Lead by example / model behaviours for others
  - People can start to influence others (their neighbours)
  - Begin making the linkage between our purchases and their impacts
  - Research and become informed
  - Need to be careful we aren’t just displacing the impact elsewhere with our good intentions
- Recycling
  - Just make the effort to take stuff to the recycling depot
  - People need knowledge to be able to act correctly
- Water
  - Use a rain barrel
  - Participate in programming (e.g., Yellow Fish Road)
  - Wash your car at a car wash (then the water will be treated, unlike the water coming off your driveway)
  - Manage your household waste—pay attention to what goes down the drain
  - Behaviours—take short showers not baths
  - Buy low flow appliances
- Avoid food waste
- Habitat
  - Responsible pet ownership
  - Recognize that your dog is an animal
- Urban forest
  - Understand the cost / value of trees
  - Pick appropriate trees for this climate
  - Take responsibility to care for your boulevard trees

**Question 3:** What can we do through community planning to mitigate environmental impacts?

- Air
  - Efficient use of land
  - Multi-modal options
  - Transit friendly design

- Require bike paths
- Design walkable neighbourhoods
- Make it more inconvenient to drive
- Need to change people's attitudes about transportation
- Shift back to grid pattern road networks in neighbourhoods
- Ignorance
  - Education: make information / processes more visible
  - Use less jargon
  - Communicate better
  - Know your audience
  - Demonstrate / expose other decision-making models
    - Make information / resources available to let people know that is possible
  - Help people think outside the box
    - Long-term thinking
  - Make all of our values obvious and integrated
  - Sometimes you need to spend money to save money
- Recycling
  - Purchasing behaviours (e.g., catering)
- Water
  - Stormwater retention design
  - Architectural controls (what is the desired outcome, design to it)
  - Urban farming / crop sharing
  - Encourage more water innovation (gray water use) at City facilities—be collaborative
  - Be patient—its okay to do trial and error
- Habitat
  - Set back from coulees
  - Incorporate ecological considerations at the beginning of planning process
    - Design with nature, not for nature
    - Take advantage of natural characteristics on the landscape (e.g. topography)
    - Need to be on the same page with what we are trying to achieve
- Urban forest
  - Make it more difficult to cut down trees
    - Financial penalties
    - Public trees (shall be retained), private trees (should be retained)
    - Replacement rules
  - Building permit checklist could include trees
  - New neighbourhoods are more dense
    - Is there enough room for trees?
    - Lot size is a bog consideration