API | Atlantic Planners Institute

IUA | Institute des Urbanistes de l'Atlantique

Sustainability Policies

for Atlantic Planners

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API SUSTAINBILITY POLICIES

1.1 Intent

The Atlantic Planners' Institute acknowledges that our current practices and lifestyles are not sustainable. Consumption of the earth's resources, largely the product of human activity, is likely to have severe effects on both the earth's natural systems and human society. The scale of intervention required to reduce and adapt to the effects of unsustainable development will require thinking and acting at all levels of government and society and function of human settlements. At the same time, there is a growing acknowledgement by scientists and policy analysts that a substantial part of the unsustainable world may be met through the design and development of communities.

Among other professional associations, the Atlantic Planners Institute members trust that worldwide vision and wise planning are required for the well being of present and future generations. As a professional response to such a requirement, the API aims to develop a shared vision of sustainability for thinking as well as a practical framework for acting towards a sustainable community.

1.2 Definition of Sustainability

API takes an integrated, systemic and holistic view of natural and built environments and defines sustainability in the context of interrelated ecosystems encompassing economic, socio-cultural, environmental sustainability.
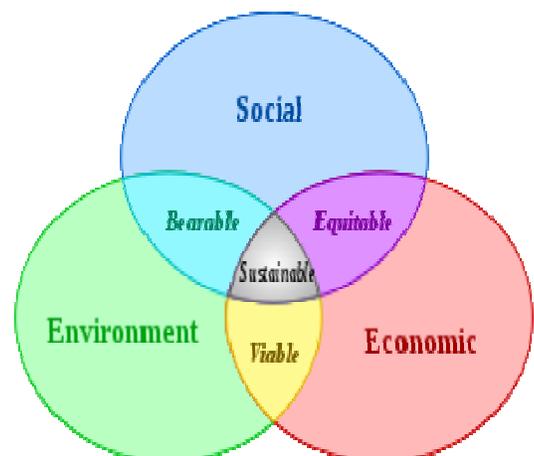
The Atlantic Planning Institute recognizes there are a number of differences regarding the definition of sustainability, however, members agree in principle that the original Brundtland definition (1992) captures the essence of the core objective of sustainability, which defined "Sustainable Development" as:

"Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

United Nations Commission on Environment & Development (Brundtland Commission Report, 1987) "Our Common Future" . Ed., Gro Brundtland. Oxford University Press: Oxford England

1.3 Pillars of Sustainability

Sustainability proposes the principle of balance - where social/cultural, economic and environmental pillars are given equal consideration in all decisions. "Governance," as the fourth pillar of sustainability, plays a significant role in achieving such a balance through implementation of decisions.

2.0   Policy Statements

2.1   Socio-Cultural Sustainability

Vision:
Social equity and justice are achieved through social mobilization, public participation and collective action. Our way of life will be defined by a sustainable culture which will be achieved through shared understanding and values towards sustainability and sustainable development. Cultural diversity and inclusion are an integral part of such a sustainable culture.

It is the policy of API to work collaboratively with others to:
- Enhance social responsibility, public engagement and participation in all development planning and decision making processes;
- Protect human rights, security and justice and remove any kind of distinction, exclusion, restriction, preference or omission;
- Create conditions conducive to greater harmony, tolerance and respect between members of the community;
- Celebrate, encourage and facilitate a multi-cultural community; and
- Provide opportunities for community members to learn about and address sustainable inequities.

2.2   Economic Sustainability

Vision:
A sustainable local economy uses natural resources only to the degree that they can be naturally regenerated; provides physical, social and cultural infrastructure to attract investment and people; creates a diversified opportunities; provides opportunities for investment with competitive advantages; and ensures resources and opportunities are distributed equitably within the community.

It is the policy of API to encourage its members to:
- Work with decision-makers to consider the long-term benefits to the community (including social and environmental) of new economic development projects;
- Ensure efficient use of land and design products and services to eliminate or minimize waste; and
- Support communities in efforts to sustain the local economy (including food, products and services).

2.3   Environmental Sustainability

Vision:
A sustainable environment is able to support diverse life systems indefinitely. The built environment exists in harmony with the natural environment, and resources are shared between species.

It is the policy of API to encourage its members to:
- Advocate for the protection and maintenance natural landscape including natural paths, streams, beaches and shorelines, viewscapes and diversified topography;
- Protect and maintain the existing wildlife habitats and the created "green corridors;"
- Seek to protect natural bio-diversity of the community; and
- Minimize the ecological footprint of the built environment.

2.4   Governance and Decision-Making

To create "sustainable communities," local decision-makers will need to buy into sustainability concepts. To be successful, decision-makers and politicians will have to gain a broad and long-term vision on sustainable governance and sustainable development, along with a sense of what is needed for such a development. If they do, they will be able to make effective and efficient decisions that meet the needs of present residents while making the best use of resources. Legal frameworks and legislations will be inclusive, fair, understandable and applicable as well as enforced impartially. Local governments will be able to facilitate and enhance social capital of their community and assist local people to be knowledgeable and fully engaged in all decision-making processes.

Through its provincial branches, it is the policy of API to encourage governments and decision makers to:
- Promote community participation to give members a voice in the decision-making process;
- Develop, adopt and enforce necessary legal frameworks, legislations, bylaws and policies to facilitate sustainable development;
- Provide transparent, adequate and understandable information regarding all development issues to local people and all other interested groups;
- Ensure that decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organizations are accountable and responsible;
- Build broad public agreement on development planning and policies before approval; and
- Provide equal opportunities for all members of the community to improve or maintain their well-being.

3   AREAS FOR ACTION

In order to achieve the proposed sustainability objectives, API will develop and implement its "Strategic Plan" concentrating on the following areas:

1)   Communication
2)   Collaboration
3)   Capacity Building, and
4)   Initiation (Tools and Projects)