



Strategic Sustainability Planning Learning Resources

A Quick Start Guide

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Introduction

These learning resources were assembled as part of a follow up document prepared after the workshop on Strategic Community Sustainability Planning held on October 14, 2011, in San Jose, for South Bay planning professionals (see [Workshop web page](#)).

The first section provides an overview and initial foundation while the appendix provides more detail.

Initial Orientation

1. **Strategic Sustainability** in two-minutes (a humorous, SHORT, YouTube video) (<http://bit.ly/yhK9LQ>).
2. **Strategic Community Sustainability Planning Services.** Go to the community planning sections of the TNS Network USA and TNS Canada websites and see how they package their introduction to the topic and to assess free learning resources:
 - a. [TNS Network USA Community Planning Services \(including AICP CM\)](#)
 - b. [TNS Canada Community Planning Services](#)
3. **Strategic Sustainability Planning – Summary Fundamentals.** Go to the TNS Network USA website and review the framework and principles and related resources:
 - a. [Framework](#)
 - b. [Principles](#)
 - c. [Case Studies](#)
4. ***The Natural Step for Communities: How Cities and Towns can Change to Sustainable Practices***, Sarah James and Torbjörn Lahti (New Society Publishers, 2004). A classic in the emerging field of Strategic Community Sustainability Planning. Also, explore the [Eco-Municipalities Institute](#).
5. **Strategic Sustainability Fundamentals**—A 30-minute recorded video webinar (skip the 30 mins. of Q&A). A recorded “Meet-Up” webinar provides a quick summary of *Planning for Sustainable Development--Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability*, by Tamara Connell, (Master’s)



Programme Director, *Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability*, Blekinge Tekniska Högskola, Nov. 3, 2011.

- a. Recorded video (no password, sign in with your name in the guest tab):
<http://onsync.digitalsamba.com/play/fs@globalnet21.org/4847-strategic-leadership-towards-sustainability>
 - b. Slides are at: <http://www.slideshare.net/Globalnet21/21st-century-webinar-draft-1>.
6. **(Strategic) Sustainability 101 E-Learning 1-hour Course**: Purchase the course for \$98CAN for 1-year. This course was developed as an affordable, convenient, initial capacity building training for stakeholders during business and Strategic Community Sustainability Planning projects. It takes an hour or so to complete, but it has a rich selection of documents that would take longer to review. Because learning the method is best done in ever deepening passes, the yearlong subscription is very helpful.
 7. **Strategic Sustainability Planning – The Fundamentals**: Download and read the [TNS Starter Guide](#) (shorter) and [TNS Primer](#) (longer). These contain the details.
 8. **Integrated Community Sustainability Planning (ICSP) Guide – The Details**: Download and skim the Guide published by The Natural Step (TNS) Canada (*Cost: \$Free; time: 30mins–6 hours*). This is a rich and dense document. You should skim it over a 10-20 minute period and then read whatever seems most appealing or read it systematically. The first section is a short overview of the Framework for Strategic Sustainability Planning and the ABCD planning method.
 9. **Sustainable Cities – Enhancing the Seven Forms of Community Capital**. A Master’s Thesis from the Blekinge Institute of Technology’s Leadership for Strategic Sustainability Programme. It is a resource guide for practitioners to engage municipal employees in moving towards sustainability. It provides a good grounding in the basics of the Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development applied to cities.
 10. **See Appendix A, below**, for more recommendations, in particular, Section 4, Current Sustainability Planning.

Other Applications

This section contains a few supplementary examples of the strategic sustainability thinking applied to different cases. They may be useful illustrations.

- **Water Utility Planning** – see [Comments - Water Utility Sustainability Planning Guide](#). Scott made this quick set of comments on a draft [Water Utility Sustainability Planning Guide](#) at the request of the APA via the [APA-SCP Linked-In discussion group](#). The Guide illustrates the common situation of a limited understanding of sustainability being the basis for advice and recommendations.
- **Sustainable Buildings**. Review “[Using The Natural Step As A Framework Toward The Construction and Operation of Fully Sustainable Buildings](#),” prepared by the Oregon Natural Step Construction Industry Group in 2004. This is a straightforward application of the ABCD Method to constructing sustainable buildings. You can see the parallels to LEED as well as divergences.



Reinventing Fire. Review Amory Lovins' and the Rocky Mountain Institute's [Reinventing Fire initiative](#), a voluntary program designed to wean the U.S. from our oil addiction by 2050, generate high profits for early adopters, and generally benefit the economy by growing 50% by 2050! This program is the product of over 40 years of Amory Lovins' path breaking thinking. It is an excellent example of whole-systems, ecological-economic thinking in action, the Natural Step's ABCD "Chess" game planning method, and strategic sustainability more generally. The program's results are a key component of community sustainability.

Appendix A More Resources

This Appendix contains additional resources and advice for study and practice of strategic community sustainability planning methods.

1. **More on TNS Human Needs (4th Sustainability Principle):** For further explanation of Manfred Max Neef's work on universal human needs, read this paper, "[What are the Fundamental Human Needs?](#)" an excerpt from "Transdisciplinary Economics for Sustainability," Manfred Max-Neef, Economist, Recorded May 27, 2008, Eco-municipalities Conference, Helsingborg, Sweden. To listen to the MP3 file, click [here](#).
2. **Deeper Understanding of the Sustainability Challenge.** The following books (and one video) provide a more complete understanding of the sustainability challenge and the requirements of an effective response. These three noted thought-leaders and synthesizers present historical perspectives on sustainability emphasizing the overlapping topics of environment, economy, security, national development, and organizational learning, enabling a richer understanding than dictionary definitions.
 - a. **Lester Brown, Plan B: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble**, [book](#) (free PDF or buy), [movie](#) (1.5 hours), [video interview](#) (30 mins). Lester Brown presents the system's crashing effects of our current economy.
 - b. **Thomas Friedman, Hot, Flat, and Crowded**, makes the security/environment/business/American spirit case for sustainability. Thomas Friedman presents the integrated security-foreign policy-national identity and economic renewal perspective as the epochal change from the old (and dying) fossil fuel industrial system to the new Climate/Energy Era resulting from a "Code Green" (Friedman's term) mobilization of U.S. society and business.
 - c. **Peter Senge, et. al., The Necessary Revolution**, illuminates the organizational learning dimension of sustainability. He does this by telling the stories of a handful of companies and communities he has worked with over the past 20 years. Peter Senge illuminates the organizational learning contribution involved in shifting mental models to understand that successfully meeting the sustainability challenge requires moving society from the current industrial "bubble" economy to a regenerative, living-system economy for the 21st century and beyond.



3. **Roots of Strategic Sustainability Planning.** A deeper dive would include the following resources:
 - a. **Natural Capitalism, 1999** ([excerpt including four strategies](#), [HBR article](#), [book including PDF version](#)). This is the distillation of 10+ years of scientific, business, and community innovation. It contains the seeds of a biologically based, 21st century industrial revolution with the potential to meet the universal human needs of the soon-to-be 9 billion of us. In addition, the [forward from the 2010 update](#) of the book includes exciting outcomes realized from applications of Natural Capitalism strategies.
 - b. **Donella Meadows, [Places to Intervene in a System](#)**. The classic article on practical systems theory is written by one of the late experts on the systems theory and sustainability. It provides a powerful framework for thinking about how to change systems.
 - c. **[Biomimicry](#)** is the foundational theory and practice of living systems for the redesign of the human economy and society in the 21st century. It can be the basis for the next industrial revolution based on the principles of living systems (one thesis of Natural Capitalism). Over the past 20+ years, it has been informing applications from ecosystem restoration, to urban design, to education. The basis for creating a regenerative and restorative economy and society, Biomimicry covers the details of sustainability, from ecological restoration to ecological cities. It will generate not only the information and knowledge, but also the concepts and theory required to invent the new forms of economic products and processes required in a sustainable economy and society.
 - d. **[Cradle to Cradle—Remaking the Way we Make Things](#)**, 2002. This is William McDonough’s & Michael Braungart’s path-breaking treatise on theory and practice. You should recognize the principle of “closing the loop” and zero waste (as in nature’s NO waste) thru redesign of products and processes for continual materials cycling.
 - e. The **[Post Carbon Reader, 2010](#)**, is likely to be the environmental call to arms and bible of the 21st century.
 - f. **[Buckminster Fuller’s Comprehensive Anticipatory Design Science](#)** (click on the Overview and Definitions-and-Resources links). No account of sustainability can be complete without some reference to Buckminster Fuller and his design science legacy. Fuller’s work is the primary antecedent of sustainability and its various threads, particularly sustainability as the next innovation platform for creating the more prosperous, restorative economy, which in turn is the basis for sustainable communities.
4. **Current Community Sustainability Planning.** You can understand best practices by reviewing the following documents:
 - a. **[Leveraging Leading Edge Sustainability Planning](#)**, a draft report of the APA CA Northern Section Sustainability Committee and San Francisco State University. It provides an overview of sustainability “ideal” practices (strategic sustainability), leading edge practice (on the ground strategic sustainability approaches) internationally, and leading edge practices in Northern California.



- b. **Three papers by Edward J. Jepson, Jr., Ph.D., AICP.** Dr. Jepson received his Ph.D. in urban and regional planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. ejjplanning@gmail.com
- i. [How Possible is Sustainable Urban Development](#): Results of planner survey used to illuminate the planning professions main approaches to sustainability.
 - ii. [Sustainability and Planning](#):
“Sustainability is a term that has received a significant amount of attention in the public policy arena. Within the planning profession, there has likewise been a growing recognition of its possible relevance in the areas of land use and general community development, and planners are increasingly finding themselves either leading or being expected to contribute to local “sustainable development” efforts. The purpose of this article is to introduce the sustainability framework in terms of its scientific basis and cultural interpretations and to identify and explore conceptual associations that tend to tie it to the planning profession.”
 - iii. [Of Hurricanes and Regimes, The Resilience of Cities](#): This paper tests Campanella’s (2006) optimistic assertion about the “magical capacity to rebound” of modern cities. The ability to rebound is similar to resilience, which can be characterized as impactive or protractive. Protractive resilience, unlike impactive resilience, can be measured for all cities, and depends on the same determinants as sustainability. These characteristics make it an important object of research. A discussion of the theory of resilience and its relationship to sustainability and planning is followed by a review of ways to investigate for the presence of the four determinants of resilience in U.S. cities and a preliminary statistical analysis.
- c. **PAS Report No. 567--[Sustaining Places: The Role of the Comprehensive Plan in Sustaining Places](#).** This is the first report of the 2010-launched APA National [Sustaining Places Initiative](#) and its Task force. The report’s survey and summary of best practices and its synthesis of implications for sustaining places comprehensive planning, make it a valuable contribution that will advance understanding and practice.
- d. **PAS Report No. 565 – [Assessing Sustainability: A Guide for Local Governments](#), Feiden & Hamin, 2011.** This is a comprehensive presentation of the issues and techniques for measuring sustainability.
- e. **Beatley and Wheeler, [The Sustainable Urban Development Reader](#).** First published in 2004, updated in 2007 or 2009. Excellent overview of the numerous threads of this field from two sustainability-planning pioneers.
- f. **APA, [Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability](#), (2002).** See in particular the four objectives listed under *III. Policy Positions, A. General Policy Objectives*. You will recognize these as the TNS Sustainability Principles minus the word “eliminate.” Removing the word “eliminate” from the principles “pulls a very powerful punch” for motivating and activating the level of creativity, intensity, and on-going innovation required for success.



- g. **Sustainable Zoning.** "The mission of the [Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute](#) is to serve the public interest as an interdisciplinary, non-partisan forum for land use and environmental issues in the Rocky Mountain West." One of their primary programs is the [Sustainable Community Development Code and Reform Initiative](#), a highly innovative and comprehensive assessment of zoning code changes required to support the development of sustainable communities. [PDF Slide presentation](#) (March 2007).