

Manitoba Planning Conference: Feb 23-25, 2012
“Beyond Surviving: Planning To Thrive”

Title of presentation: Planning for Thriving Communities

Presented by: Beth Sanders

Date: February 23rd, 2012

Beth Sanders’ session was a very informative session on how people are affecting the communities we live in today. She talked about her hometown of Fort McMurry being on the news for thriving and for being the fastest crushing city in northern America. Her work at Fort McMurry has been mainly about planning on reviving the community. Sanders and her group faced many challenges in trying to revive the community and in order to persevere they set up a set of principles that guided them. These principles included:

- Look after self – make a social habitat for yourself first before looking after others.
- Look after others.
- Look after place.

Sanders stressed the need for planners to look after “self” before embarking on a community project and looking after others. This is important because it will reduce health implications and stress the ability to make sound and solid decisions to help communities bounce back quickly and thrive.

Sanders went ahead and explained the evolution/history of man and human settlement in relation to the development of cities all over the world. It is said that the evolution and movement of man originates all the way from Africa while exploring the transition from agrarian era to modern day change in behaviour with technology. I paid little attention until Sanders mentioned how humans tend to adapt well in environments they live in and try to create new ideas that enhance their way of living.

Sanders also stressed the importance of the health of our wellbeing in our community that can enhance our lives especially through the habitats we create. She posed a question “What moves us?” Sanders answered by saying human movement is around new ideas - we are interested in innovation over time and especially through technology and we shift and adapt to the changes we create.

The habitats Sanders talked about included:

1. The social habitant
2. The physical habitant
3. Economic life

These three habitats start with identifying the capitals in the community; this is a practical guide which is not different from the community capacity building strategy in community development.

In a nutshell, I would say that Sanders’ session led community planning practitioners to rethink new ways and ideas on how they can use the capitals/resources they have in a community to benefit the society without crashing the economy. Using Fort McMurray as an example, communities can recover from a downfall, but it will take time - as long as they know how to apply the knowledge and put her strategies at the forefront of their development initiatives.

Summarized by:

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