



## Citizens and Sustainability: Something Real and Lasting

Sustainable Calgary Community Sustainability Indicator Project Outcomes

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Sustainable Calgary Society



## Table of Contents

Executive Summary .....	6
Using this Report.....	7
PART ONE	
A Preliminary Comment on Research Design and Execution.....	8
The Participatory Action Research Paradigm.....	8
The Characteristics and Strengths of Qualitative Research.....	9
Reflexive Analysis: The Researcher as Participant.....	9
Citizens and Sustainability: Something Real and Lasting: Summary of Research Findings .....	10
Who Got Involved, How and Why?.....	10
Personal Outcomes.....	11
Community Outcomes .....	12
Governance for Sustainable Development.....	15
Lessons Learned and Considerations for Future Initiatives.....	16
PART TWO	
Introduction.....	17
Qualitative Research Approach.....	17
Demographic Profile .....	18
Analysis and Interpretation.....	19
Section A: The How, the Who and the Why of Involvement in the Project .....	20
How Did People Get Involved in the Sustainable Calgary Indicator Project? .....	20
Why Did People Get Involved in the Sustainable Calgary Indicator Project?.....	20
Who Participated in the Sustainable Calgary Indicator Project - And Who Did Not?.....	22
Section B: Significant Personal Outcomes .....	26
1. Inclusion of the Social Dimension into A More Holistic and Grounded Understanding of the Complexity of Sustainability.....	26
2. Personal Growth .....	31
3. Behaviour Change.....	35
4. Increased Capacity for Advocacy of Sustainability.....	38
5. Professional and Personal Skills Development and Career Development .....	41
Section C: Community Outcomes .....	45
1. A Productive and Engaging Citizen Dialogue .....	46
2. The Power and Sophistication of Citizen-Led Initiatives.....	50
3. Modest Municipal Government Policy Influence .....	51
4. A Benchmark for Indicators and Performance Measurement .....	58

5. Contribution to an Emerging Progressive Sustainability Network.....	59
6. Contribution to an Enabling Environment for Achieving Sustainability.....	60
7. A Valuable Reference Document.....	61
8. A Tool for Sustainability Educators.....	62
9. Catalyst for New Research and Projects .....	64
Section D: Improving the Process.....	67
Articulation of Project Goals.....	68
Preparation of Participants .....	68
Exclusion within the Process.....	70
Dissemination of Results.....	71
Appendix One: Strategies to Achieve Research Rigour .....	73
Appendix Two: Interview Guide Questions .....	79

Expanded my horizons  
Made me much more hopeful about living in Calgary  
Don't have a TV anymore...Don't have car anymore

Wow! This happened in Calgary!  
Very powerful stuff

significant piece of foundational work  
Ecological preservation and social justice  
that caring citizen thing

participatory grassroots initiative  
participation is the key  
make change for the better  
pushing the envelope

reaching across silos  
Calgary should be a great city

## Executive Summary

In 1998 and 2001 the first and second State of Our City Reports, covering thirty six social, ecological and economic indicators of the sustainability of our city, were published as part of Sustainable Calgary's Community Sustainability Indicator Project. Over two thousand Calgarians participated in the identification, research and documentation of these indicators. In May and June of 2004, thirty-two individuals who had participated in the Indicator Project were interviewed as part of an effort to determine the significant personal and community outcomes of the Project.

The analysis of those interviews suggests that the indicator project had a relatively limited reach attracting participation first of all through community development, social justice and environment affinity groups; second through local government and the University of Calgary networks, and to a lesser extent the business community. Interviewees characterized the participants as a relatively diverse group within a sub-group that might be characterized as civic-minded, middle-class, professional, thirty, forty, and fifty-something's for whom sustainability was not a totally foreign concept. Interviewees identified a variety of reasons for getting involved in the initiative - out of curiosity, a desire to learn and to contribute, to make a difference and out of a sense of pride in where they live.

The indicator initiative outcomes can be grouped into six broad categories. First, the initiative contributed to a process of transformational learning for many of the participants. Interviewees experienced a significant increase in their sustainability literacy. This increased literacy was a catalyst for skill development, behaviour change and a more confident and effective advocacy for community sustainability. In short, interviewees became better citizens. Second, the project provided a benchmark for sustainability - in a sense raising the bar for understanding, creating tools for, and taking action on, sustainability in the city of Calgary and beyond. Third, the project contributed to the creation of an enabling environment for sustainability and nurtured a sustainability network across civil society, local government, the private sector and citizens. It has 'given permission' for other Calgarians to advocate more strongly for sustainability. Fourth, through the project sustainability has achieved

greater resonance among policy actors (e.g. city planners), structures (e.g. City Council) and initiatives (e.g. Triple Bottom Line Reporting) at City Hall. As a result of the project city employees approach their work differently, aldermen are better informed and policy initiatives are better planned. Fifth, the project has demonstrated the appetite for, and value and efficacy of, more participatory and inclusive democratic processes. Finally, the project demonstrated the power and sophistication of citizen-led initiatives to design and carry out complex public engagement processes and research and analysis on issues of public concern.

## Using this Report

This report is designed to be accessible to different users. The Executive Summary gives the most general overview of the background to this research and the research findings.

The Preliminary Comments on Research Design and Execution are meant for the academic and research oriented audience. It provides a rationale and contextualization for the methodologies used in conducting this research.

The Summary of the Research Findings is meant as a stand-alone segment of the report. It gives a brief narrative overview of the major findings of the research – covering the how, who and why of involvement in the Indicator Project, and summarizes the Project's five significant personal outcomes and the nine significant community outcomes.

The Lessons Learned section is a brief discussion of the significance of the project outcomes for future work on sustainability, for social movements more generally.

The Introduction to Part II of the report is a more detailed description of the research process and methodology for those with an interest in the finer details of the research. The research findings are explored in detail in sections A, B, C and D with extensive quotations from interviewees. This rich and nuanced interpretation of the interviews is meant to provide assurance of the validity and rigour of the analysis and findings and allow each of the interviewees to speak for themselves.

## A Preliminary Comment on Research Design and Execution

The design and execution of this community sustainability indicator project outcomes research is unconventional in at least four ways. First of all the research is meant not simply to report objectively on some phenomenon, but is a milestone in an ongoing process whose objective is social change. Second, though I take full responsibility for this report, I consider the interviewees and other members of the community to have been co-researchers in this work. Third, dialogue and deliberation play a central role in this project outcomes research, as they have in the indicators project itself. Fourth, I have been an instigator and participant in the process being investigated. My interest is aligned with the social change agenda of the process under study. For all these reasons I think a few words are in order to contextualize this research from within the participatory action research paradigm, the qualitative methods of inquiry and the unique perspective of an insider researcher.

### The Participatory Action Research Paradigm

I consider the Sustainable Calgary Community Sustainability Indicator Project as an ongoing participatory action research process. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an approach to research that seeks to illuminate individuals' self-understanding, offer a critical analysis of social reality, and marshal that understanding and analysis for the political task of social transformation.<sup>1</sup> PAR aims to transform both theories of society and social practices, and to illuminate both individuals' subjective understanding of themselves and the objective social reality they find themselves immersed in.

PAR is a method of collective research wherein the traditional researcher joins forces with laypersons to conceive of, design, and carry out research into some social phenomenon. The collective also analyzes and acts upon findings of the research. PAR breaks with the positivist tradition of the objective researcher, who stands apart from the phenomenon being researched. The people of the community where the research is being undertaken are not seen as objects of research but as subjects fully engaged in the research process.

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<sup>1</sup> Kemmis, Steven and Robin McTaggart eds. (2000), in Lincoln and Denzin (2000)

Furthermore, the PAR researchers take a position in solidarity with the subjects with whom they are engaged.

PAR is a pragmatic research approach. It has a problem-centred focus concerned with understanding a problem in order to resolve it; a commitment on the part of both researcher and researched to a process of learning in dialogue; and respect for the non-researchers' capability and potential to produce knowledge and analyze it.

### The Characteristics and Strengths of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is clearly a very different exercise than quantitative research. Until fairly recently, quantitative research methods have been the standard against which all research has been judged. Even inquiries into human behaviour have attempted to measure the credibility of their research against criteria established for quantitative research in the natural sciences. Fortunately, the situation has changed dramatically over the last forty years. Researchers of many persuasions have taken issue with the assumption that the "scientific method" alone holds the key to illuminating reality. More importantly, social scientists have introduced and defended a diversity of qualitative research techniques and proposed criteria of rigour that are uniquely suited to the demands of qualitative research. Qualitative research can provide "rich, deep and complex"<sup>2</sup> understandings of the world.

### Reflexive Analysis: The Researcher as Participant

One of the foundations of PAR research is that there is no completely objective vantage point. A researcher is more or less subjective, depending on the circumstances and methods employed, but is never completely objective. As a researcher, I engage in this research from a unique but partial point of view, just as every other participant in the process does. My position is even more implicated in this research process. Through it I am applying academic research tools to a process of transformation in my own community.

Dr. Noel Keough, Lead Researcher

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<sup>2</sup> Lincoln and Denzin, eds. (2000) handbook of Qualitative Research 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, Sage: Thousand Oaks, Cal.

## Citizens and Sustainability: Something Real and Lasting Summary of Research Findings

### Who Got Involved, How and Why?

Most interviewees heard about the project by word of mouth within their social, affinity, and work/study networks. A first tier networking included groupings of individuals with a thematic interest in community development, social justice, and environment. A second tier of networking encompassed local government, the University of Calgary, and to a lesser extent, the business community.

For many interviewees, the indicator project was not the first exposure to the concept of sustainability, although for most, it was a first-time involvement in a sustainability initiative.

Interviewees got involved in the SCIP out of curiosity about the project, the desire to learn, the desire to contribute, and the belief that the project was leading edge and could make a difference and out of a sense of pride in where they live.

Interviewees characterized the participants as a relatively diverse group within a sub-group that might be characterized as civic-minded, middle-class, professional, thirty, forty, and fifty-something's for whom sustainability was not a totally foreign concept. Generally considered to have been under-represented were aboriginals, seniors, and to a lesser extent youth; people living in poverty, the business community and the upper economic demographic; and people from the city's northeast quadrant. It was also suggested that "decision-makers" and "a municipal champion" were missing.

Access and choice describe the circumstances of the non-participants and under-represented group. In terms of access, interviewees recognized that individuals found themselves excluded from the process due to ethnicity, age or economic means. Interviewees also commented on participation as a choice that some people make and others do not. It was generally felt that the civic-minded chose to participate and the complacent and mainstream chose not to.

### Personal Outcomes

The indicator project encouraged interviewees to include the social dimension as an integral part of a more holistic and grounded understanding of the complexity of sustainability. Participation in the indicators project transformed interviewees' perceptions of sustainability. Interviewees spoke about the limited perceptions they brought with them to the indicators project. For the majority, prior to the project, sustainability was predominantly an ecological and to a lesser extent economic concept. Sustainability was seen as relevant only within a limited sphere of human activity. It was a rather abstract concept with a relatively simple prescription for change.

The indicators project was an occasion for significant personal growth for those who participated. That growth occurred in seven distinct ways. Interviewees talked about expanded horizons; increased mindfulness of sustainability; increased capacity for critical thinking; the experience of a good citizenship high, of having been inspired by the process and of their involvement having been an empowering experience.

Though interviewees were hard-pressed to unequivocally attribute behaviour change solely to the project, but the project was judged to have contributed to or reinforced evolving attitudes and behaviours. The characterization of the relationship between those changes and the project, included "very direct influence," "this project helped us," "reinforced ... choices," "was a catalyst," and "it hit home with me." The range of behavioural changes identified by the interviewees included sustainable home renovations; investigating the local community association; beginning to recycle, support the local economy and landscape using native species; taking on a volunteer commitment with Inn From The Cold; and making a commitment to live a simpler lifestyle.

Interviewees had difficulty attributing their advocacy activities to the influence of the project though for many it served to reinforce an existing commitment to advocacy. Interviewees talked about a wide range of advocacy activities. Some interviewees felt they were more effective advocates because of the "confidence," "knowledge," and "sharpened"

skills they had gained through the project. For some, the advocacy was restricted to promotion of the State of Our City reports. Others interpreted advocacy as leading by example through their own sustainable behaviours. Other advocacy activities were directed toward family and friends, an individual's geographic or ethno-cultural community, the workplace, or City Hall, or simply in a willingness to discuss issues in social conversation. Some interviewees took on more of an advocacy role within their teaching activities.

Professional and personal skill development and career path development were among the personal benefits derived from participation. Younger interviewees talked about the project as having enhanced job prospects and as important milestone in their career path decisions. A wide variety of professionals participated in the SCIP, including teachers, social workers, engineers, environmental consultants, planners, and local politicians. In each of these professions, interviewees reported significant professional development as a result of their participation in the project. Many interviewees drew a direct link between their participation in the indicator project and enhanced job performance. The development came in the form of new knowledge, introduction to participatory process, new skills, networking opportunities, and the acquisition of a new concept, framework, and language to apply in their work.

### Community Outcomes

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the indicator initiative was its promotion of participatory democracy. When interviewees were asked what was the most remarkable aspect of the indicator project, the most common response had to do with the citizen engagement process. The dialogic nature of the process seemed in contrast to a "corporate, task-oriented," stakeholder or adversarial process, which many interviewees were more familiar with in public engagement. Several dimensions of this dialogue emerged from the interviews. Interviewees remarked on the use of participatory and popular education techniques, making room for local, lay, experiential and expert knowledge. They felt the dialogue was inclusive, creative, open and welcoming and that it encouraged participants to think in terms of the common good.

For many, what was most remarkable was the process - a complex process that delivered a balanced, high quality, sophisticated product. Interviewees felt strongly that the initiative has demonstrated the energy, creativity, and sophistication - in short, the effectiveness - of citizen action. In their estimation, the State of Our City reports were produced in shorter time and with less money, more participation, and higher quality product than is often seen in the private or government sectors. The project demonstrated that citizens can carry out complex and coherent analyses of important issues and communicate them effectively. The project provided a living example of how and why active citizen engagement on important issues should be encouraged and supported.

The State of Our City report was designed to be a reference document, and a planning, policy and education tool. To some extent, it is being put to those ends. It is not merely sitting on shelves. In the public and not-for-profit sectors, there is evidence that the report is an accessible, living document that has some purchase as a planning and education tool. Though the report does not have much profile in the business community, one organic food business supplied the report to its customers. Specifically, interviewees identified the use of the reports by the ethno-cultural community, the homeless foundation, and local funding agencies.

For several interviewees, a significant benefit of participation in the indicator project has been the opportunity to use their experience of the process and the report as teaching tools. For some, the report and the sustainability conceptual framework provided the content for teaching activities, while for others, the process provided the opportunity to reflect upon their role as formal and informal adult educators. Some reported that the act of teaching obligated them to challenge and deepen their own understanding of sustainability. The teaching venues where these interviewees practiced ranged from the workplace, to social movements, to formal post-secondary educational institutions.

The indicators project has catalyzed new community research. The most noteworthy example of this is the Sense of Community initiative, which identified a data gap and insufficient understanding of sense of community. On the strength of the 1998 report, Sustainable Calgary convened a group of agencies to develop a survey tool to assess sense of community in

Calgary. The City of Calgary, the United Way of Calgary and Area, the Calgary Foundation and the Calgary Health Region all participated in the project. Other projects inspired by the indicator project were the Dover Community Indicator Project and the Safer Cities Initiative.

Interviewees identified that the indicator initiative had generated new social (e.g., valuing cultural diversity), economic (e.g., economic diversification), and ecological (e.g., ecological footprint) research.

Interviewees identified five broad categories where the process could have been improved: articulation of project goals, preparation of participants, broader participation, minimizing exclusion within the process, and the dissemination of results.

Although interviewees recognized that policy is messy and diffuse, their comments indicate that the project did achieve a significant influence on policy. Effects were identified in three areas of policy design within municipal government: policy actors (e.g., city planners), structures (e.g., City Council), and instruments (Triple Bottom Line Reporting). Interviewees felt that one of the most significant accomplishments of the initiative was that it established a benchmark for indicator reporting, providing an example of successful process, content, and presentation of indicators.

Interviewees recognized the importance of the indicator project in creating an enabling environment for sustainability. Interviewees felt that the sustainability indicator initiative had helped provide legitimacy to the sustainability discourse and that the effect of this should not be underestimated. In effect, this work gives "permission" to others in municipal government or even in the business community to promote a sustainability agenda. Another aspect of the creation of an enabling environment was the initiative's role in the creation, enhancement, and strengthening of an informal sustainability network that spanned local government, the not-for-profit sector, and average citizens.

### Governance for Sustainable Development

The community outcomes are broadly consistent with what has become known as governance for sustainable development (Lafferty 2004). This concept recognizes that in today's world, well-functioning communities do not rely solely on local government for direction and management. Governance, rather, is a much more broadly based coordination of government, private sector, and civil society interests. Governance for sustainable development recognizes the organic nature of change, the need for new metrics to help steer change, and a "ramp up" of democratic capacity. It encompasses a general vision of a deeper democratic practice (Dryzek 2001; Young 2001), as well as specific deliberative policy processes (Hajer and Wagenaar 2003).

## Lessons Learned and Considerations for Future Initiatives

1. Despite the intention and efforts access to the process was difficult for visible minorities, the old and the young and those who are economically marginalized. Special effort and focused resources are needed to truly make citizen participation open to everyone.
2. For some participation is as much a matter of choice as is it of access. The question must be asked whether it is good enough to provide a space for the civic minded to participate or whether special efforts should be made to gain the participation of the complacent or the mainstream.
3. There is a growing appetite for participatory democracy. Civil society has a role to play in the design and refinement of processes that promote democratic participation beyond representative forms of democracy.
4. Introducing people to the concept of sustainability is more effective when they are encouraged to get involved in a concrete way.
5. Public consultation or citizen engagement is more effective when it creates a process that goes beyond the narrow technical outcomes, and provides an opportunity for personal growth.
6. Participatory processes do not have to appeal to individual self-interest, but can be effective by appealing to the common good.
7. Though the indicators project had a significant effect on the policy process, it did not gain the traction it could have. There is much work to be done to understand the policy process and how citizens can intervene effectively in it.
8. Good, alternative local social, ecological and economic research is lacking and when provided has a ready audience.
9. Politicians need to be made aware that citizens are capable of contributing in a sophisticated ways to public policy debate and research.
10. Though the outcomes are not always immediate, and the challenges substantial, civil society organizations should trust that genuine citizen participation is worth the effort.

## Introduction

Since 1996 Sustainable Calgary has produced three State of Our City Reports assessing the sustainability of our city based on thirty-six social, ecological and economic indicators. One of the foundations of these reports has been citizen engagement. Over two thousand Calgarians participated in the Community Sustainability Indicator project – identifying, researching and documenting the sustainability indicators.

In our survey of other community sustainability indicator projects around the world, we found that in-depth research into the actual outcomes of these processes was lacking. The only other example found was a recent investigation of the Sustainable Seattle process completed by Dr. Meg Holden of Simon Fraser University.

So what exactly can we expect to achieve through a community sustainability indicator project? We decided the best way to identify actual outcomes was to talk with a diverse group of individuals who had participated in the Sustainable Calgary Indicators Project. We wanted to discuss participants' knowledge, experience and insights into four questions:

1. What was your experience of the indicator project?
2. What personal outcomes have resulted from your participation in the indicator project?
3. What community outcomes have resulted from the indicator project?
4. How could the process have been improved?

### Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative research approach using face-to-face interviews was chosen for the study. The interviews were deemed more appropriate than a more quantitative on-line survey for several reasons. Surveys are notorious for low response rates, and it was felt that an on-line survey might be ignored or approached as a chore for those who did respond. It had been some time since anyone from Sustainable Calgary had been in communication with most former participants. Interviews would give Sustainable Calgary an opportunity to reconnect with

former participants and have meaningful, open-ended discussions about their experience with the initiative and their thoughts on how to move from indicators to action.

From the database of former participants thirty-four individuals were contacted and invited to participate in the research. Only two individuals declined to participate. The thirty-two interviews, conducted in April and May 2004, were wide-ranging discussions averaging seventy-five to ninety minutes. Interviews were taped for later reference so that the conversations would not be distracted by note-taking. Appendix 2 contains a copy of the original interview guide.

Once the interviews were completed, a six-stage analysis was undertaken to:

1. Craft a narrative overview of the research findings;
2. Write summary responses to each question;
3. Identify a preliminary list of project outcomes;
4. Conduct a workshop to validate, adjust, and elaborate on the preliminary outcomes;
5. Revise the research findings based on the workshop discussion; and
6. Circulate the final draft research report to all interviewees for final comment.

#### Demographic Profile

Though the interview sample was not meant to be statistically valid, interviewees were asked to provide some basic demographic information so that a profile of the interviewees could be conveyed. The analysis of the demographic information revealed that there were an equal number of male and female interviewees. The average age of interviewees was 44 years and the average period of residence in Calgary was 25 years. On average, interviewees held between one and two post-secondary degrees. Twenty-eight of the 32 interviewees were Caucasian. The map in figure 1 shows the community of residence of each of the interviewees. Twenty percent of the interviewees live in new communities, 44 percent live in established communities, and 36 percent live in the inner city. Fifteen percent of interviewees live on the city's east side, and 85 percent live on the west side. The intensity of involvement of

interviewees in the indicator initiative ranged from three individuals who were co-founders of Sustainable Calgary to one individual who attended one workshop during the 2001 process.

### Analysis and Interpretation

Several strategies were employed to ensure that the presentation, interpretation, and analysis of this report would satisfy the researcher, interviewees, and external reviewers that the research is in fact rigorous and that the findings are plausible and worthy of attention. To honour the participatory methodology that underpins this research, the analysis is presented with limited interpretation of participants' perspectives. Rather extensive quotations are presented so that the voices of interviewees are heard as fully as possible. Multiple quotations are used for several of the findings in order to satisfy readers that the findings are consistent with a number of interviewees and not just one individual.

Quotations are associated with individuals through aliases so that the reader can follow a thread of an individual's thoughts through the entire report. I have purposefully used long quotations to provide a sense of the rhythm of the interviewees' thoughts, and to provide some conversational context for the particular points I illustrate by the quotations. Wherever possible, the interpretations and descriptions of key themes employ words and phrases used by interviewees themselves. With this strategy, I hope the reader will have some capacity to judge the faithfulness and finesse of the interpretations made and conclusions drawn. The report also contains a discussion of the findings in comparison to the relevant literature.

## Section A: The How, the Who and the Why of Involvement in the Project

### How Did People Get Involved in the Sustainable Calgary Indicator Project?

The interviewees who were long-time residents of Calgary heard about the project by word of mouth within their social, affinity, and work/study networks. A first tier networking through social and affinity networks was strongly associated with the project's sponsoring organization, the Arusha Centre. This first tier included groupings of individuals with a thematic interest - in this case community development, social justice, and environment. A second tier of networking encompassed local government, the University of Calgary, and to a lesser extent, the business community. Three interviewees, newcomers to the city, heard about the project as a result of personal searches - for example, on the Internet - to find opportunities to get involved in the city. Clearly, though the project did touch a diversity of sectors and geographic regions of the city, its reach was limited.

### Why Did People Get Involved in the Sustainable Calgary Indicator Project?

#### *"That Caring Citizen Thing"*

People got involved in the SCIP out of curiosity about the project, the desire to learn, the desire to contribute, and the belief that the project was leading edge and could make a difference and out of a sense of pride in where they live.

#### *Curiosity*

Some interviewees were intrigued by the project itself: "it was interesting," raised their "curiosity," "piqued my interest," or was able to "catch the imagination." Bridgit said, "I was always curious about how you could accomplish such a big task." Janet said, "I was curious and always interested in process personally and professionally." For Conrad, the curiosity had to do with "the actual individuals involved. Everyone I talked to had some kind of an interesting take. It just brought together an interesting group of people."

*An Opportunity to Learn*

Beyond curiosity, some interviewees specifically identified the opportunity to learn as a motivating factor in their involvement. For instance, Bruce “got involved to learn more and to reflect all of the work Sustainable Calgary was doing against the city’s efforts for long-range planning.” Bill was excited about “the creation of local knowledge and the de-centering of expert knowledge. The involvement of community and citizens.” For Louise, “it was a great way to learn about sustainability and participatory grassroots initiatives.”

*The Desire To Contribute*

Other interviewees got involved out of a desire “to contribute” or to “help out” with the project. John felt that it was “the right thing to do.... I thought I could contribute.... I had what I thought would be a different background than a lot of people involved, coming from an engineering background.” Reesa had previously been involved with the now dormant Calgary Eco-Centre: “We had stopped doing the [bioregional] calendar because it was too much to carry. But I was still looking for ways that the Eco-Centre could be out there. And I was really keen on pushing forward any kind of sustainability project.” For Kevin, “part of being in a sustainable community is being involved. You’ve gotta create that. Participation is the key to that kind of change. And at the time I was working on some relevant concepts that weren’t well known, storm water management type things, and I had a keen interest in that. At that time it wasn’t happening, and this was an opportunity for me to get involved.”

*The Project’s Potential to Make a Difference*

Many of the interviewees were excited about the potential for the project to make a difference. Ron offered the opinion that “it struck me that this was very much an initiative to make change for the better ... pushing the envelope. It was asking some tough questions that had never been asked before.” Rachel was interested in “the potential of not just preaching to the converted.... How do you create that cross-sectoral dialogue – a complexity of understanding ... reaching across silos?” Emily got involved because she had “heard a lot about the first State of Our City report,” and had seen the report “and thought it was really well done.” Marlino was attracted to the project because “it is very important to have an

alternative." One city employee commented, "I was sort of assigned to do this but when I got there, there was a lot of personal interest as well."

### *Pride in Place*

Pride in place and a sense of the obligation of citizenship contributed greatly to interviewees' motivations for participation in the SCIP. John saw it as "the right thing to do." Joy stated, "I'm a native Calgarian and I have a lot of pride in the city." Kevin talked about how "Calgary should be a great city." Mahmoud said in a matter of fact way that "the answer was simple. It's part of our life." Maya summarized this sentiment succinctly when she commented that she participated because of "that caring citizen thing."

### Who Participated in the Sustainable Calgary Indicator Project - And Who Did Not?

*"From people who didn't know a single thing about sustainability to people who were experts in water management to experts in organic food production. - just a complete range of expertise and knowledge.... People that had been in Calgary for one year to all their life. Inner city representation to suburban representation". Jake*

*"A lot of people from different organizations, different ethnic groups, communities... young kids, women, seniors. A mix of people from different ages, organizations, immigrants, Canadians, people born here". Mahmoud*

*"I think the people that were missing were all of the people who neither know about nor truly care about the consequences of their actions towards the world as a whole. In others words - most Calgarians". Louise*

*"Maybe lower economic groups. And maybe higher economic groups. And people with less education. Most people were probably white-collar. Not a lot of people doing blue-collar jobs. Maybe those people don't even feel comfortable in these kinds of projects". Reesa*

When public processes are designed to promote social change the question often raised is whether the process has been able to reach beyond the 'usual suspects' - the nebulous 'mainstream'. The SCIP process did not meticulously track the diversity of those who

participated, but interviewees' subjective perceptions of who participated and who did not, is a good barometer of participant diversity.

Overall interviewees felt the participants were a relatively diverse group within a sub-group that might be characterized as civic-minded, middle-class, professional, thirty, forty, and fifty-something's for whom sustainability was not a totally foreign concept. Generally considered to have been under-represented were aboriginals, seniors, and to a lesser extent youth; people living in poverty, the business community and the upper economic demographic; and people from the city's northeast quadrant. It was also suggested that "decision-makers" and "a municipal champion" were missing. Though some interviewees did perceive significant diversity in the process, there was no consensus in how significant it was. We can say the boundaries were pushed – it was definitely not a homogenous group. In Conrad's opinion, "We attracted a minority of Calgarians but within that minority they were not easily characterized."

Two very different thematic foci are useful lenses through which to examine the issue of participation - access and choice. In terms of access, interviewees recognized that individuals find themselves excluded from social processes due to ethnicity, age or economic means. Interviewees also commented on participation as a choice that some people make and others do not.

#### *Exclusion Due to Ethnicity, Age and Economic Means*

Opinion was mixed with respect to the ethnic and cultural diversity of participants. Some interviewees felt "there was limited visible minorities" or that participants were "predominantly white, representing a lot of what Calgary has been." Other interviewees "seem to remember there was quite an ... ethnic diversity as compared to the normal Calgary cross-section" or "more diversity than I anticipated."

There was more of a consensus that both youth and seniors were underrepresented. Marlino commented that "it would be interesting to have indicators through the prism of the youth...."

They will be the next generation of stewards," or "Seniors, what would sustainability be in their minds?"

Economic means is an interesting lens to view participation. Both those living in poverty and those with economic power, were generally thought to be under-presented, but for very different reasons. For example, Bruce wondered "do we reflect people with poverty?". Bill offered that he'd "like to see more of the corporate patch." Mark echoed that sentiment:

I don't know what word I would use to describe [it].... I think if you look at [it], I didn't think the participants were representative of the business community. I thought some of the not-for-profit side of the world were well represented.... SC did a good job of getting the folks out that are looking at the areas impacted by high growth, but I don't think they were able to get out the folks who actually create the growth. What that says is it's a real challenge that Sustainable Calgary and other groups face. How do you get both sides of the equation at the same time talking the same language?

*The Civic-Minded, the Complacent and the Mainstream*

The second perspective on participation has to do more with choice than exclusion.

Interviewees talked of the participation of the 'civic-minded', and the non-participation of the 'complacent' and 'the mainstream'. The perceived civic-mindedness of the participants was reflected in comments like those of John, "I think people were interested in and cared for the future," or Kevin, who characterized participants as "self-selectors" and "idealistic." For Krista, those who participated were "people who felt like they really had something to say about their community." Other descriptors of participants included "constructive," "passionate," "pleasant," and "enthusiastic." Bill offered an interesting insight in that the process engaged people for whom "the term 'sustainability' has been an attractor." In Armbruster's estimation, the project participants had "a strong predisposition to ecological preservation and social justice."

Without contradicting the civic-mindedness of participants, Louise remarked, "I think it was a lot of people as usual preaching to the converted. So especially if you are going to get people involved for the next step, it would be nice if you could get the more typical, industry,

downtown, drive-to-work people and their opinions". Or in Conrad's words, "It excluded the complacent and the ignorant and the care-less people. And unfortunately, I would contend [they are] the majority of Calgarians." Louise made this assessment of who was missing:

The attitude of the rich is that they may be willing to throw money at something but don't ever try to get them to modify their behaviour by making them not buy or do something they want. The attitude of the middle class is that there is only so much money to go around so don't ever ask them to do a more expensive option. But also if they can scrape the money together to buy a luxury, then they deserve it. The attitude of the overworked is that they don't have time for anything that takes more time out of their day. It's go, go, go, at work and at play. In other words, it's always someone else's job to get this world sorted out and we can always hope that technology will solve the problem in the future.

Pat expressed the view that perhaps there could have been more mainstream groups involved in the process:

I felt it was very focused on the left-wing social justice kind of organizations. I didn't think there was enough focus on people who may be at the far end – the radical thinking on the right side or industry or groups like Scouts and Guides, Big Sisters and other mainstream NGOs. You would get more robust discussions if you had a better mix of people.

Although "preaching to the converted" is a characterization with some validity, Joy's comments offer a counterpoint:

I hope that I contributed, everyone brings their own opinions, but I think too a lot of time when people get together and talk about things they are already the converted, so I hope by being involved I was able to bring in a few others into the project who weren't necessarily converted but kind of exploring. So being able to bring employees from an oil and gas company hopefully gave a little bit of that. Also maybe a bit of balance. I don't live in the inner city... The idea of getting up and walking to work is limited especially the way the city is structured, so where I'm at right now, there were some options ... maybe new views from living a little bit outside and having to commute.

Rachel offered a perspective on the challenge of broader representation in commenting that "the people that you really want to have an impact on who might be interested in what our core

is, but they have never had the chance to be involved, and it wouldn't occur to them to be involved. But all that is about more effort and way more work without necessarily a better outcome."

## Section B: Significant Personal Outcomes

Interviewees spoke with conviction about personal changes they had experienced as a result of their involvement in the indicators project. Several personal changes were noted. The most prominent change had to do with the inclusion of the social dimension into a more holistic and grounded understanding of the complexity of sustainability. A second major theme was the many dimensions of personal growth from a greater capacity for critical thinking to strong expressions of empowerment. Interviewees also reflected on behaviour change; increased capacity for sustainability advocacy; and skills, professional and career development.

### 1. Inclusion of the Social Dimension into A More Holistic and Grounded Understanding of the Complexity of Sustainability

#### *"Something Real and Lasting"*

Interviewees reported a wide range of understanding of the sustainability concept prior to their involvement in the SCIP. Those understandings ranged from "that's the first time I heard of the word" through "poor to nil," "fairly basic," and "reasonably high...I had read quite a bit," to a "pretty high level knowledge." Participation in the indicators project transformed interviewees' perceptions of sustainability. Interviewees spoke about the limited perceptions they brought with them to the indicators project. For the majority sustainability was predominantly an ecological and to a lesser extent economic concept. Sustainability was seen as relevant only within a limited sphere of human activity. And it was a rather abstract concept with a relatively simple prescription for change. The indicator project encouraged interviewees to include the social dimension as an integral part of a more holistic and grounded understanding of the complexity of sustainability.

*Highlighting the Social Dimension*

A small minority of the interviewees felt that they came into the project with an understanding of sustainability that spanned the social, ecological and economic dimensions. Marlino for example: [my wife and me] were working on a number of initiatives in the Philippines before we came [to Calgary], mainly around ecological sustainability and the sustainability of certain kinds of livelihood programs." Rachel had developed a broad understanding of sustainability through her "core interest in international development" and her undergraduate "attempts to bring sustainable agriculture onto the curriculum of Canada's largest agricultural college" through "education and outreach."

However, the majority of interviewees spoke of having an ecological, and to a lesser extent, an economic understanding of sustainability. An critically important and certainly unanticipated outcome of the indicator project is the role it played in highlighting the social dimension of sustainability, or what one interviewee called "the third leg of sustainability." Reesa communicated her renewed understanding of the social dimension of the indicator project by reflecting upon the connections among the indicators:

I think that it did kind of open my mind to considering things like, for example, what if a large segment of the population cannot read and you're in a society or economy where people are expected to be literate. What are the implications if you have large numbers of people who can't participate and what is the actual cost to the health of our community? Or even when people are disconnected from the community, what is the end result of that? Do we end up then having to treat more people for mental illness? It is not just about recycling paper and composting. There are other things that make a community sustainable.

Karen "had some knowledge in some areas but it was pretty confined to more science-based issues and definitely in terms of the community ones ... hadn't even thought of those ones before." Joy spoke of how the project had introduced "more the social context, but I think initially my own thinking was more ecology." For Bill, the project became "a very powerful border between ecological justice work and social justice work." For Ron, sustainability

was a fundamental background to the work that I was doing in the corporate world. Many of the very young and evolving principles of sustainability were just coming to the forefront as I got started in 1975. An even more fundamental set of roots came from my mother who was a school teacher all her life - very much a naturalist - connected to nature and having an appreciation for natural phenomena. [It was] not like an academic's knowledge but a lay person's intellectual sense that everything we do is connected to everything nature does. [The project] revealed more for me on the social and the human side of sustainability. Wouldn't claim that it was a revelation, that something had never been apparent or occurred to me before, but it sharpened the focus on various aspects of ... homelessness, poverty, and hunger, pieces of the puzzle that got more prominence in this work than I've seen in a lot of others. So yes, very powerful.

Harvey, a city employee working in the transportation sector talked about how the project

probably contributed to increasing my attitude toward sustainability. How much did I know about sustainability before I went in? I thought 7 out of 10. I was probably wrong.... Now after the process, 9 to 10 out of 10.... Some of these initiatives I never knew were sustainable initiatives. For example, things like childhood asthma or daycare workers' salaries and turnover. Now I know, so my awareness has gone up quite a bit.

For Conrad, consideration of the social dimension of sustainability entailed a shift from working on environmental protection to a focus on the sustainability of urban human environments:

I think it is amazing the impact it did have on me because at that point in time, up to then, I'd been volunteering with CPAWS. My main focus had been on environmental protection, and I think that I was starting to see some kind of problem with ... focusing too much on the symptoms of the problems and not on some of the deeper causes. It is at that point that I really radically changed a lot of what my interests were.... Let's look at what's happening in our cities, especially our consumer habits our resource use habits and how those are then impacting the so-called environment out there and causing our troubles and pressures on those resources and wilderness areas ... just seeing how all of these are interrelated.

*The Holistic Nature of the Concept of Sustainability*

Bringing into relief the social dimension of sustainability provided interviewees with a more holistic framework. In fact, "holistic approach" was a phrase frequently used to describe the model introduced by the indicator project. Barb recognized that the project "filled a unique gap. No one else is doing that. We are all sitting in our stovepipes, but no one was trying to pull it together." Armbruster felt that the project was "pulling together information on themes that cut across traditionally somewhat siloed areas of interest – across the ecological and social development divide and economic development and cultural development divide." Bill remarked that "it didn't allow things to stay in separate little boxes." Bruce spoke of the value of the holistic approach from the perspective of working at City Hall:

It was always something that kind of stays with me as a positive experience. That was probably my first experience looking at a really integrated holistic understanding of a community's health. That feels fairly significant ... for me. As a community development worker, I'd spent time in community development working on various kinds of small projects, but this was a way of wrapping up a lot of projects into one and saying, this is a document that reflects where we are as a healthy community.

*Appreciation of the Complexity of Sustainability*

Several interviewees took up the theme of complexity when reflecting on how their perceptions had changed. Reesa spoke of being "already one of the converted. But certainly it made me more aware of the complexity. A sustainable community is not just one that's got its blue boxes out on the curb." Other interviewees did not use the term "complexity," but their comments were a reflection on trying to live sustainably in a complex world. For Ron the project "has been a constant ... reminder of the balancing act that goes on all the time between personal behaviour and sustainable behaviour." Mark recognized the complexity of dealing with sustainability in real life in that "as much as I say it's really clear in terms of what sustainability means to me, not everyone has the same idea of what that is."

Paradoxically, Cathy's struggle with the complexity of sustainability pointed her along a path of simplicity:

[Sustainability] is a hugely complex thing to be thinking about. One of the directions I've been going in my life is to not be so formulaic about what it is I have to do in order to live my life in a way that is congruent with my values and to be more open ... in terms of sustainability.... The science isn't there and life is too complex to figure out what it is you are supposed to do. Stop worrying about stuff like that and make some choices that work for me in my lifestyle and be consistent with them. At one time I was into all the complexity. Now I'm moving toward finding the simplicity in this. That's a bit freeing.

### *Grounding the Concept of Sustainability in Real Life*

For many interviewees, the concept of sustainability had been appealing but somewhat abstract. Interestingly, though most had heard of and were to varying degrees familiar with the concept of sustainability, most reported that the SCIP was the first "formal sustainability initiative" or "initiative to make something happen" that they had been involved in. The hands-on nature of the project was instrumental in grounding the concept of sustainability. Three passages from the interviews of Deborah, Maya, and Emily illustrate this point:

I had an intuitive understanding of it, but I was able to put it in words and it's helped me, and a lot of people, that we are not just economically driven. Because sometimes in Calgary the dollar is so important.... So this enabled many people to put in words that you have to look at the social side and the environmental side. And the word sustainability started to have a meaning.... So it's not just about roads and buildings. – Deborah

Even taking that complex situation and bringing it down to indicators, that was a big aha! initially. Obviously we can measure landfills – but the other indicators? It's an interesting process....What is sense of community? There are actual ways to gauge whether we are progressing in the areas that we are choosing to in society. And [now] I've seen how those indicators are made. – Maya

Practical application of my understanding of sustainability. Looking at how simple some of the indicators could be. That's valuable. It is not that complicated. It shouldn't be that difficult. – Emily

Krista's experience exemplifies the increase in sustainability literacy facilitated by the indicator project. Prior to becoming involved in the indicator project, Krista

thought it was another one of those trendy phrases ... and we actually, we kind of made fun of it. I said, 'Guys, this is what we have to do,' and everybody is laughing at me. And I said, 'ok, ok.' But I really feel like I have a respect for that phrase now. Because when I look back at the report it kind of helps me to look at the things that are real and lasting, and that's I guess what I learned, is that it is something that is real and lasting, for me.

## 2. Personal Growth

When asked about the influence of the project with respect to improved understanding, attitude change, or personal change, interviewees talked of how they had "learned and grown substantially." That growth occurred in seven distinct ways. Interviewees talked about expanded horizons; increased mindfulness of sustainability; increased capacity for critical thinking; the experience of a good citizenship high, of having been inspired by the process and of their involvement having been an empowering experience.

### *Expanded Horizons*

Joy reflected that the project "certainly helped me expand my own horizons." Similarly for Marlino: "I think people who do a lot of community development work tend to focus more on community indicators, but with this project you look at a variety of different areas. What does bird count have to do with the state of our economy, for instance? My interest is more in the interstices between those indicators."

Barb also spoke about an expansion of her horizons in terms of possible personal futures, but also city futures:

I was thinking, what would be one of the things in my life work I would like to do? When I get through being the 24/7 health person where would I like to put my volunteer efforts? One of the areas I was thinking about was the community. I hadn't thought of that previously. I haven't acted on it yet in terms of committing time to it, but it has certainly raised my level of awareness and concern. I think I pay attention to articles in the paper. I believe I have been more sensitized to those perspectives. I think the other aspect is ... I am really quite intrigued about learning and understanding more about what our city could be like. What is the art of the possible for us now?

*Increased Mindfulness of Sustainability*

Emily spoke about how “any kind of public participation or awareness building is personally rewarding. I’m a learner. I take every opportunity I can to learn.” Maya captured her increased mindfulness in a simple phrase: “Now there are all these little lights going off.”

For many interviewees, sustainability is now more constant or present in their lives. Kevin spoke of being more “mindful of the principles of sustainability.” For Diane, mindfulness was related through an anecdote:

I was listening to CBC Radio and a tri-athlete who won down in Australia. They were interviewing him.... His girlfriend had pointed him to the Mountain Equipment Co-op Web site where they have a footprint measure. So I did that for myself as well. So I don't know.... I think just participating sensitized me – you listen in a different way.”

*Increased Capacity for Critical Thinking*

In response to the question of whether the project had shifted attitudes, Jake said, “Absolutely. I’m so much more critical of Calgary decision-makers and the way Calgary is growing. My attitudes have gone from optimistic to a little more pessimistic. Which is good as part of keeping a critical eye on things and raising your voice when you think things aren’t going great.”

For other interviewees, the awareness encompassed specific issues and new learning. For Marlino, the learning came “especially in one of the offshoots of the project – ecological footprint. It brings together those indicators more dynamically to show how different kinds of consumption affect someone else.” For Rob, learning was in terms of the “depth of understanding of an issue.... Since [the project], if I hear about something that may be an issue, I don’t look at that and go – the answer to this issue is this. Well, if it is an issue, then it warrants more investigation.”

*The Good Citizenship High*

Several interviewees spoke in terms that were evocative of a feeling of satisfaction with having contributed as a citizen, to the common good. Bridgit reflected, "Personally, it is an ethical consideration. As a good citizen, I feel like I should participate or at least be aware of alternative ways of living in the city within sustainable means." Krista "felt really good about ... as a group we worked really hard to reach as many people in the community as we can."

For Harry, it was satisfaction with being able to bring to the table an issue he was particularly passionate about: "Personal benefits certainly were I got to bring to attention ... the one issue that galls me the most in this city – the [recycling] of plastics. I don't know how many blue juice jugs or windshield washer fluid [containers] get thrown in the landfill in the city in a year. And there's no process to recycle them. I'm glad I got to be able to bring that forward to the issues committee."

Mahmoud was emphatic that his participation was motivated by the common good. "In the beginning I said this is not for individuals. When I decided to get involved in it, it wasn't an intention to benefit myself. It was my intention to benefit more than myself. So the benefit will come tomorrow or next week or next month or next year.... Is it only commercial? We are not making a Pizza Hut or KFC!"

*Inspiration*

As the interviews proceeded, it became apparent that the indicator project and Sustainable Calgary were doing something that was not only unique but was a beacon in what people perceived as a rather conservative political climate – one not particularly welcoming to the concept of sustainability. Interviewees spoke of how the project opened doors, provided a reason to be optimistic and hopeful, and presented an alternative model and an initiative with some staying power.

Maya spoke about how she "had an idea that politicians didn't care that much, or very few of them did, and that big business didn't care. I was surprised to see how...people...are making

change and not these entities that are untouchable. That was a good lesson for me.... I was exposed to a lot of special people that conduct themselves toward sustainability in a really professional way, and that was amazing to me - lot of mentors. I found that inspiring 'cause they are a little wiser and older than me. They're really constructive individuals.... I'm more optimistic."

Three of the interviewees were co-founders of Sustainable Calgary. Bill said the project "made me much more hopeful about living in Calgary." Louise commented that the most remarkable thing about her involvement was "that the project interested me enough to stay with it that long." Rachel reflected that she thought the project "made a lot of people happy that it exists, that there is an expression of this thinking in our city, and almost a pride by association." The following passage from Cheryl exemplifies that pride by association:

It is nice to see a tangible little booklet in your hand that shows a commitment to being a steward for our environment at a local level. It is a symbol of the commitment of the community because it is community driven, which I think is key. It shows a commitment to being aware of the impacts on our environment as a collective society. It shows an interest in learning more about it and educating others and it shows a dedication to continuing to keep that awareness of environmental sustainability. I look at [the Report] and I refer to it and I show it to people when they visit. I think that's very remarkable. How many other documents do you actually refer to time and time again? It shows immense dedication.

### *Empowerment*

Many of the above passages that exemplify personal growth could legitimately be interpreted as evidence of empowerment. Fred spoke in terms evocative of citizenship, but even more so, his words demonstrate that his participation in the project was an occasion for personal empowerment. This passage demonstrates how Fred connected the exercise of his rights and responsibilities as a citizen participating in this project, with his wider world:

Getting involved. Putting my input into it. Just learning a lot of stuff about the community and what I could achieve out of it and what I could benefit and

what some other people could benefit from me seeing what I go through. What I gotta overcome.... My disability is a hurdle from time to time.

I wanted to see what the city needed for not just the disabled but for everybody, to see what the city would look like in the future. Trying to get to know more people and people getting to know me when they see me out in the community. They might say to me, oh, you were on that committee and I say, yeah. Some people might remember that. They say, how's it going? What are you up to? You can't just say this is what they need. Everybody has to put in their input.

I talked to doctors at the university about why we don't have a medical textbook for people with disabilities. I find it very difficult when you go into the doctor's office. Like when the doctor just comes out of the university ... and they have a sophisticated language. They need to know how to treat a person with a disability so he can understand what they are saying to you and what I'm saying to them. They talk to their guardian or their sister but don't talk to the person directly. I know that's happened to me quite a few times.... I'm the patient, and the doctor should be talking to the patient.

### 3. Behaviour Change

Though interviewees were hard-pressed to unequivocally attribute behaviour change solely to the project, a range of behavioural changes were discussed in the interviews. The characterization of the relationship between those changes and the project, included "very direct influence," "this project helped us," "reinforced ... choices," "was a catalyst," and "it hit home with me."

#### *Participation in the Project as a Contributor to Behaviour Change*

Interviewees spoke about a broad range of behavioural changes they had made in recent years. However, over half of the interviewees reported that their behaviour "hasn't changed greatly"; the project "might have contributed a little" but mostly "that comes from my kids"; or "it renewed any commitment I had already." The following quotation from John is indicative of the ambivalence of interviewees with respect to the project's effect on behaviour change:

I don't particularly think so because [my wife and me] both try to be as sustainable as we can.... I don't think this has changed our day-to-day activity...on its own; however it did ... (pause) ... there probably are some ... did the indicators influence me? Perhaps! I can't count it out because there

probably have been.... We have also looked at things like the program *Your Money or Your Life*. Which came first and how do they interrelate? It's hard to unravel the thread. So once you learn something or once you know something, then how does that carry through and how do you say ... so it may have."

Bruce talked of how "I'd always been trying to learn about green initiatives and ways that I could make my own eco-footprint less on the planet. So I had a susceptibility to doing those things round my house and in my personal life,". However, he was non-committal about whether the project had done more than "perked me up a little bit to know that there was lots more to do."

For Don, the project may have had a temporary impact and "a minor contribution to my own personal behaviour. It was a good reinforcement ... [but] no. It worked for a while but I've fallen off the wagon again." For Rachel, the project caused a dilemma in that "on the personal behaviour change level, it means I am aware of all the things I should be doing but I'm not doing. That's all about where I'm at in life and what I can manage."

#### *A Variety of Personal Behaviour Changes*

What kinds of specific behavioural changes did interviewees discuss? In the following passage, Ron talks about sustainable home renovations undertaken over the past few years.

My wife and I, we took on an old military house in Garrison Woods and we built into it features as a reflection of sustainability ... trying to minimize the footprint and maximize the resource value. There are all sorts of pressures on that that are economic ... the ethical issues, moral issues, or those who don't have. Sustainable Calgary has had a very direct influence on the way we thought about this house ... the thinking that went into the design of the house.

Karen talked about connecting with the community more by "[finding] out about my community association, or just thinking more about knowing your neighbours." Kevin spoke at length about how the project, in concert with other influences, informed his choice of community and consumer habits:

Personal behaviour? Yeah I think it did. That and my master degree in EVDS led to recognizing that I guess ... I really couldn't see us living in downtown Calgary to walk to work. But it is important to look at a community, a suburb, looking for one to be more sustainable. Where does the pragmatism kick in? To be close in and have the home that I have is one hundred thousand dollars difference at least. That's one hundred thousand I don't have. So how do I get the best approximation of an inner city in a new development – MacKenzie Towne is the only place in Calgary.... It reflects in choices like vehicles. I had a pickup truck four-wheel drive and a travel trailer and now a small, much more fuel-efficient vehicle and no RVs.

Marlino, an immigrant to Calgary, spoke about behavioural changes related to recycling, supporting the local economy, and native landscaping:

When you come in as a newcomer, you don't think of those things. You think of things like employment and where your children go to school, but underneath that would be this pattern of consumption – and the pattern of where to throw your refuse. So I think behaviourally this project helped us. We recycle more and we are not using pesticides. It made us more conscious about the impact of certain products on the ecology but also on the local economy.... One of the things we were thinking about this year was to put in more native grasses [and] wild flowers.

Cheryl talked about changes she had introduced around her home, including water conservation, recycling, consumption choices, and transportation:

I think that some of my awareness of specific indicators ... I've taken to heart because especially now that I have a child, you think long term about sustainability in a very different way. I'm very conscientious of the products I buy, things like packaging, recycling, reducing, the three Rs – that's become very important to me. Planting indigenous plants in my garden or choosing not to require a lot of extra water for my garden. Even the bird count – I put birdseed out in the winter, but I don't put it out in the summer because I want them to have their natural diet. Choosing to walk. I walk every day to get my groceries with the baby stroller instead of taking my car.

Armbruster talked about undertaking a volunteer commitment some time after his participation in the project. While he did not attribute the decision to his participation, he acknowledged that "it wasn't an in-your-face link, but it was probably a factor." He continued:

I came away [from the food bank usage research] with a sharper sense of how you don't have to be unemployed to be hungry. People trying to earn a living with one or two jobs still need to use the food bank. That personally made me very angry.... I've been volunteering a little bit with the Inn From The Cold program - families that are earning incomes ... through employment but have no permanent place to live. Again that reinforces the injustice of our provincial economy.

Conrad talked about his conscious decisions to begin to live a simpler lifestyle in the context of his participation in the project:

I think that it was a catalyst for me to change my attitudes. I may not have learned something specifically from that work but it opened my mind as I said to look at these things in much more detail. It led me to start questioning my own habits and that led into my thesis itself, where I really started questioning my own consumption habits and made some major radical changes in my life. Don't have a TV anymore. Don't have a car anymore. Living really simply.

#### 4. Increased Capacity for Advocacy of Sustainability

As was the case in considering behavioural change, interviewees had difficulty attributing their advocacy activities to the influence of the project. In the words of one interviewee, "It's contributed, but there have been many other things in my life that have contributed." Some interviewees were uncomfortable characterizing themselves as advocates. One said, "I see myself as a neutral person." Another said, "I am not comfortable as a proselytizer," while another interviewee said that "advocacy is too strong a word" for what she does. Reesa reported that she had not engaged in advocacy work, not because she did not want to, but because "when I was really more actively involved in the environmental group I had more opportunities.... I don't know that when I am talking with people it is something that I can easily bring into the conversation. [At work] maybe once or twice a year." One City Hall employee commented, "I don't know if I'm [a strong advocate]. In terms of my own priorities, there are other things I have a stronger passion for. Government accountability - that's my thing."

Nevertheless, interviewees talked about a wide range of advocacy activities. Some interviewees felt they were more effective advocates because of the “confidence,” “knowledge,” and “sharpened” skills they had gained through the project. Maya talked of how the project “definitely reinforced things that were already starting and made new connections. As an advocate, I’m a little tougher now. I won’t back down.” Emily described herself as an “advocate for the environment within the voluntary sector. I volunteer on a lot of boards and committees where I bring in an environmental perspective”; she added that the project “reinforced ... not to be too narrow in my focus.” For some, the advocacy was restricted to promotion of the State of Our City reports. Others interpreted advocacy as leading by example through their own sustainable behaviours. Other advocacy activities were directed toward family and friends, an individual’s geographic or ethno-cultural community, the workplace, or City Hall, or were incorporated into teaching activities or social conversation.

Marlino talked about advocacy activities within the ethno-cultural community where there is little focus on

the whole ecological discussion.... So I think one of the things we have been trying to do is bring that discussion within the [ethnocultural] context as well. We’ve not been quite successful. We talk about consumption levels among immigrants. On the one hand you want to have diversity of foods but on the other hand you want to support the local production. So how do you balance those two – the whole notion about diversity. If you have 100 percent consumption of rice, you don’t grow rice here so you are tied to this importing economy.”

Krista described herself as “a strong advocate for our community, period.” She continued,

I think that now when I think about things, you know, I think about what that means to me and is this something that is sustainable for our community. We had two little parks that were redeveloped and again, do we want to keep these plots? I said yeah, because those things make our community sustainable. They make it so that people want to live here. One [park] was near a lot of subsidized housing and if any [park] needed to be fixed, it was that one. And the booster club donated a lot of money. We just did a sod turning...and we are really excited to see the finished product.

Ron described himself as “a bit of a promoter [of the report] ... where there were people who I thought were receptive, where there was a readiness for this,” including at “the City of Calgary, yes, without doubt.... I helped the city at the very start design their environmental system.... The second area has been the Environmental Advisory Committee to Council. [And] at the provincial level, modestly but only modestly.” Janet also saw herself as an advocate for the report at City Hall “in setting up some briefing sessions trying to get aldermen on side.” Likewise, Don “did try to sell it here at the City. I brought [it] up to the committee. I tried to push getting you in front of the Chief Commissioner. I tried to put you on the radar screen of the higher level people at the City.”

Jake also talked about his advocacy efforts as a Sustainable Calgary representative on the Environmental Advisory Committee:

[The EAC is] a committee that reviews environmental policy before it goes to the standing policy committee and on to Council for approval. Representing Sustainable Calgary on that, I try to bring a voice that does talk about sustainable values and the fact that there are three sides to sustainability, while a lot of other people who are coming to the committee are focused solely on environment. Now the City is promoting triple bottom line approaches to decision-making, so it is difficult to not look at the social and economic side when you are talking about environmental policy. Particularly where the city doesn't currently have a process is where they review the cumulative effects of policies and projects they are implementing. So they are not looking at the overall effect of an interchange development on the other two sides [environmental and economic]. So that is one of the recommendations I made last year – to develop a cumulative impact assessment of every decision Council makes.

Several interviewees talked about advocacy through social conversation or “shooting the breeze with people over a cuppa java.” For example, Barb talked about how her “conversation had changed”:

People would say, oh, for gosh sakes, I like my three-car garage. Leave me alone. But I would say we are creating ghettos, suburban ghettos. Children and seniors are held hostage. I was quite taken by these communities who had put limits to growth and densities and mixing of neighbourhoods.... I find I read some of those articles now, and think about them and talk about them in my social circles. And work circles around coffee break. And I can't say I really did that before.

Two interviewees see their advocacy activities mostly in relation to their post-secondary teaching. Conrad, for example, spoke of how he was able to bring sustainability themes into all his classes,

whether it is a class on Canadian geography, or political geography, where I brought in ideas of sustainability and their relationship to global security and peace. In Geography 321 has probably been my greatest contribution yet. I had great feedback from my students and we involved ourselves in a really exciting project where students took on an initiative at one of the ten Suzuki Foundation's priority actions ... and then they wrote up a report on what made that action challenge personal barriers [and] societal barriers. The feedback I got from that project was great.

#### 5. Professional and Personal Skills Development and Career Development

Participation in the SCIP project was an opportunity for most interviewees to develop useful skills that they applied in the workplace or in their community volunteer work. Younger interviewees talked about the project as an important milestone in the development of their career paths.

##### *Professional Skill Development*

A wide variety of professionals participated in the SCIP, including teachers, social workers, engineers, environmental consultants, planners, and local politicians. In each of these professions, interviewees reported significant professional development as a result of their participation in the project. The development came in the form of new knowledge, introduction to participatory process, new skills, networking opportunities, and the acquisition of a new concept, framework, and language to apply in their work.

For Ron, an environmental consultant, "the project adds a new dimension [to] my consultancy work." Karen, a consulting engineer, was able to apply the project experience to APEGGA professional development hours. Joy shared her experience with the sustainability network within the international oil and gas corporation she works for. Janet works as a facilitator with the City of Calgary. For her, the project was "career development because it helped me

understand a bit more about sustainability. That's good for my business.... Even this triple bottom line project...I see a little bit differently. The City is struggling with the global reporting initiative and I think, well, I have a small taste of what that might be." For Jake, who works as a growth management consultant with small communities, "Absolutely, the learnings from this experience I try to use in my professional life. [The project] gave me an opportunity to be a facilitator.... [I t] was great, learning new skills and practicing skills." For John, it was the new inclusive sustainability framework that opened new doors for his consultancy in community economic development:

If I go back to before 1997, I would probably never have been interested in this project - working with the fellow out at Siksika [Reserve] who wanted to start a market garden. He didn't know anything about business. So I actually did some consulting and helped him set up an organic market garden on the Siksika reserve. He hired youth who were almost unemployable, who would normally get a job at A and W. It improved the diet of the people in Siksika. They were excited about it because [the food] was grown locally.

Armbruster works as a consultant in the social development field. He spoke of how he

appreciated more and more over the last three to four years the importance of research in moving forward social agendas. I've seen the power of sound, well-gathered, well-packaged research in bringing issues to a head ..., creating stronger public profile for issues. I've been disabused of any feelings I might have had before that research was mostly academic.

Through his participation in the project, Bruce, a City alderman, "strengthened [his] connection with some people in the community." He talked about how the project "got me to reflect and think about the long term ... by being able to have a language ... that I could then bring to my regular work world.... Language like ecological footprint, ideas about sprawl and development, were relatively new to me at that time."

Another alderman, Deborah, used the "broad framework" of sustainability as a tool to improve her "local consultations." Participation in the SCIP "pushed [her] toward being much more outcomes focused." She reported that "the dialogue helped me be more inclusive ..., because when you ... start really, truly listening and trying to understand what the other one is saying

..., I think that helped me even building up my skill level.... I went into negotiation training shortly after that.”

For Cathy, a city planner, “the key thing that was interesting for me was the process itself. Grassroots discussing what the indicators would look like and how you would determine them. Just to see how it unfolded over time and resulted in the reports themselves.” Kevin, an employee of a public utility regulator, remarked how the indicator project “was probably the first experience I had with [public consultation] and it opened the door to a professional involvement [at work] and being willing to step up and say yeah, I’ll sit on that committee.”

The project also offered valuable networking opportunities. Emily, who works with a local funder, reflected that “the more we know about the organizations we fund and what they are trying to do and the outcomes they are trying to achieve, the better we are at raising money to enable groups to do that ... [and to] encourage collaboration.”

A special case with respect to professional development was Rachel, one of the co-founders of Sustainable Calgary. For her, the professional benefit of the project, and more generally, of working with a not-for-profit, has been “massive”:

Trying to take theoretical thinking to an applied context, we got to define public processes, to think about communications, outreach to people. We got to do popular theatre. We got to dream up what we thought this little world should look like, that’s unbelievable. I think I’m only [now] fully appreciating.... On [my current work] project I have to deal with communications people.... I am also dealing with our [public] engagement folks....Well, [at Sustainable Calgary] we were doing community development. We have that framework. It is one thing to understand the terminology and it’s another thing to actually try some of it in the various contexts. The task forces, the think tanks, creating a look for our reports, proposal writing ..., the opportunity to present at conferences and tell the story, volunteer management, mentoring....

This is great! I ... get paid to do what I have been doing volunteer for a long time. That is to think about how to make sustainability happen and to create programs that are about trying to move in that direction.

*Personal Skill Development*

While most interviewees spoke of professional skill development, some talked about personal skill development. Krista, for example, a long-time member of her community association, said, "Personally, I felt like I learned how to work with an organization I'd never heard of before and apply for grants. That is something I had limited experience with and that ended up being quite a positive thing.... It helped me see how much goes into one small grant."

*New Career Paths*

Several of the participants in the SCIP were in their twenties and were either contemplating, were in the midst of, or had recently completed graduate and post-graduate degrees. Three of these interviewees spoke about the impact their participation in the project had had on their career choices.

Rob was a newcomer to Calgary when he found out about Sustainable Calgary through the Internet and got involved in the SCIP. Shortly after his involvement, he decided to go back to school and study geography. The project was a "really positive" influence on his career choices:

I guess the best thing that I can say about Sustainable Calgary is, now that I have completed my undergrad - and so much of it has focused on sustainability outside the urban environment - my experience with SC got me thinking that that's not necessarily where I think the most important type of sustainability is. The urban environment is really the one that people can manage the best and quite possibly have the biggest influence on. [My] experience with [Sustainable Calgary] has really shifted my focus from sustainability outside of cities to sustainability in the urban environment.... So it has affected the choice of what I am going to do for my masters project in a fairly substantial way.

Maya worked with the indicator project over a couple of years on the project team and as a Board member. She talked about her return to school and her goal to become a teacher. When asked if the Sustainable Calgary work had influenced her decision to do education, she replied, "Yeah. I'm thinking that there's a whole bunch of young people who can benefit from thinking about the world. If I can be a vehicle for that, that's good, a good path."

Jake had just completed his Masters degree at the University of Calgary in the Faculty of Environmental Design when he found out about the indicator project. He was thrilled to learn of a project in the community where he could apply his skills. He attributes his ongoing interest in sustainability in his career to his work with Sustainable Calgary:

I find that a lot of my peers have learned a lot about these concepts but have moved on in their careers. Gradually they dropped that sense of wanting to infuse sustainability in the work they do. The work that I do is not necessarily based on sustainability. But having gone through this project and having then stayed tied to Sustainable Calgary through the work on the Environmental Advisory Committee, it stays on the radar so you can promote this level of work in whatever career you are in. From a personal and professional level ..., using Sustainable Calgary as one of the avenues to lifelong learning has fueled my work – my sustainability work – for the last five years.

## Section C: Community Outcomes

The previous section demonstrated how many of the interviewees got involved in the SCIP because they believed it would make a difference to the sustainability of our city. In this section, interviewees reflect on what difference the project did make in the city – what have been the community outcomes of the project? Nine distinct outcomes were identified. The project: 1) promoted a productive and engaging citizen dialogue 2) demonstrated the power of citizen-led initiatives to carry out sophisticated initiatives on issues of importance 3) achieved modest municipal government policy influence 4) became a benchmark for indicators and performance measurement 5) reinforced the emergence of a progressive sustainability network in the city 6) contributed to an enabling environment for sustainability work in Calgary 7) The State of Our City Reports have become a valuable reference document with a wide variety of users 8) created a tool for sustainability educators and , 9) catalyzed new sustainability research and projects.

## 1. A Productive and Engaging Citizen Dialogue

When interviewees were asked what was the most remarkable aspect of the indicator project, the most common response had to do with the citizen engagement process. The dialogic nature of the process seemed in contrast to a “corporate, task-oriented,” stakeholder or adversarial process, which many interviewees were more familiar with in public engagement. Several dimensions of this dialogue emerged from the interviews.

### *Employing Popular Education*

The dialogue drew upon a diversity of active engagement techniques. The use of these techniques, sometimes referred to as popular education techniques, set the process apart from a conventional public consultation, and in one interviewee's opinion, gave the process “different rhythms as you went along.” Krista “remember[ed] the one exercise where it demonstrated very clearly how all the needs that you have in life are really connected – connected with these strings that we had and we were trying to walk in between them.... I t was a very impactful exercise.”<sup>3</sup> Janet “really liked a lot of the opening things around recognizing who we are as a group, what parts of the city we came from – it was nice community building. I hadn't experienced that before.”<sup>4</sup> For Bridgit, the dotmocracy technique was “impressive.... I guess you always talk, discuss, or dispute things, and then to actually see it as a fact – here is my opinion.... Maybe because I am a somewhat visually oriented person.... I could hear it very clear, people don't like your idea, or people do like it. There is no pussy footing around.” For Ron, the most memorable moment was a piece of popular theatre used to animate the report launch event – “the appearance of ‘Super Indicator Vindicator.’ People in the aisle were very impressed – the level of energy here. There was a creative spirit at work. There's a point to be made. Very powerful stuff.”

### *Making Room for Different Kinds of Knowledge*

The dialogue supported the inclusion of local, lay, and experiential knowledge into the deliberations. Deborah remarked that with “the variety of people around the table ..., you

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<sup>3</sup> The Web of Life

<sup>4</sup> Socio-grams

honed in on dialogue rather than having a set format.... Dialogue works.... To me, that brings people's ideas out more." For Bill, it was "an empowering process." He connected the process to "the ideas of participatory action research, people's knowledge, and Freire's literacy work."<sup>5</sup> In Bill's opinion, "people actually know much more than they realize, even though they have been conditioned not to know or not to create knowledge. This process offered a way for them to be recognized and have a voice." Marlino was impressed that "the whole process of coming up with indicators ... involved working with indigenous knowledge and people, and linking that with the more academic funded research."

### *An Inclusive Dialogue*

The dialogue was "inclusive" and "engaging" of a variety of citizens with varying life experiences and challenges. For Emily "It's always meaningful to have a conversation about something with a group of people who are diverse and don't have the same understanding ..., don't have the same expectations. So the conversations are a little bit more in-depth that way. There is a lot of listening and speaking and learning going on." Rob said, "The thing that got me the first was how wide a range of people that are out there. We had all kinds of people from all different walks of life and different experiences and different social demographic areas and everyone came to contribute and everyone did contribute. I thought that was quite remarkable." What impressed Kevin was "actually getting sustainability indicators out of a diverse set of views. It worked [even though] there were some pretty sharply divided views."

Marlino remarked, "What do I remember most? ... Bringing in more people to the process who would otherwise not have participated. For instance, working with Fred and actually helping him return the project to other people in [the Development Disabilities Resource Centre].... And I remember our workshop at L'Arche." When asked about his report back to DDRC, Fred said,

Yeah, they gave me good comments.... They said "Oh, you really got yourself involved in something that you wanted to really do." It gets me out there and I can see what needs to be changed when the City can only afford so much....

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<sup>5</sup> Brazilian Paulo Freire is perhaps the most influential adult educator of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Just sitting in and letting the people know what kind of person I am now – living in the community.... You don't want to leave everybody out [because] then they get kinda disappointed.... My input was more for myself, or for in general people with a disability, or people who are always having difficulties overcoming barriers.

Barb's commentary alluded to another kind of inclusion when she talked about "the groups [being] relatively multidisciplinary.... There were lots of people [in the health group] that had nothing to do with health but obviously had an interest." Louise, one of the co-founders of Sustainable Calgary, talked about how the process was open enough for her to bring a unique perspective to the table.

I think my contribution was to provide a different point of view to the table, the way of thinking of an engineer, a mother, and a suburbanite. Having a father and husband in the oil business plus being an engineer in land development provides an awareness of big and small business pressures and constraints that government employees do not necessarily understand. Profits must be made in order for taxes to be paid that result in funding of social projects. Being a mother and part of a family in the suburbs provides a window on the mindset of the people that want the best, newest, and neatest of everything. Quite different from the granola-eating, walk-to-work crowd of the inner city.

#### *A Creative, Open and Welcoming Dialogue*

The dialogue facilitated a "creative," "constructive," and "open-minded" process with a "building of ideas" as they "emerge" from the process. John remarked, "It wasn't like a group of eight or ten people got together and drove [the process]." Bruce saw the process as one wherein people were "starting to grapple with issues. Starting to learn language and ideas. So there was a healthy debate. A lot of back and forth. People who were really forward-looking and trying to create something that had been done elsewhere ..., people who were on a cutting edge together and trying to learn some things and apply it to Calgary." Conrad remarked that "it was a true dialogue in a Freirian sense. People [were] willing to step back and allow the ideas to form themselves."

For most interviewees the dialogue was "welcoming", "gentle", and "self-directed", engendering "trust" and an absence of "fear" to express oneself. Janet talked about an instance when the

group dealt with some tension, “which happens in large groups everywhere.... One lady ... had water quality as her big thing, and she kept carrying around pictures of foaming green stuff coming out of our water treatment plants. It didn’t matter what topic. It didn’t matter what part of the process, what time of the evening.... [But] it was a very gentle process, the group took care of itself.” Deborah felt the process was trusting in that “nobody was afraid to talk, to put their ideas on the table.... I enjoyed it because I was able to put my ideas on the table and no fear of anything coming back at me.” Barb spoke of the challenge of trusting the process itself:

I have to say that I actually thought it was a very good process in the end, and I think I was impressed with the reports that came out for sure. What was interesting for me, though, was it’s like any process where you bring community members together – it’s always murky, it’s always fuzzy, and you hope someone else is going to do the work. I remember the meetings. I thought they were well structured. I thought the information was clear, but the process of working through those indicators, because they were all ranging all over the map, and there were different interests in the room.... It was tough for me in terms of some of that discussion because some of it just seemed serendipitous or just whimsical. And yet if you are going to put together reports like that ..., [if] they are going to have ... the credibility, there has to be some sort of rationalization of the data and understanding what is futuristic or wish-list versus where do we have some good solid information. Interestingly, in the end the report came together like that. But you know the process worked.

#### *A Dialogue for the Common Good*

The dialogue called upon people as citizens acting for the common good. For Barb, “the notion ... of a citizen when you’re in a process like this is more about collective good than just being a citizen and an individual. That was one of the things that I struggled a little bit with, that notion of citizen and health worker. People say, ‘Take off that professional hat.’ If they mean they want me to be open and not just hammer my agenda, absolutely, but I can’t separate out my knowledge base.” Mahmoud explained,

For me as a Kurdish person, I wasn’t there only to contribute to the Kurdish community in Calgary but the large group at the workshop. From the City, from the Spanish, from the Sikh, whatever – get together to contribute to the Calgary community. A bigger umbrella for all ethnic communities in Calgary....”

*Tensions, Debates and Exclusionary Practices*

All of this is not to say there weren't tensions, debates, and exclusionary practices in the process as well. Dialogue is no magic remedy to abolish those. Barb's comments highlighted that reality: "With a group like that who don't know each other and you have to figure out how to talk together and get meaning out of each other. Yeah, it's always a struggle, but overall it was enjoyable. For Rob, the conflict was a real learning experience with respect to

the whole idea of working with the focus groups with blue-blooded conservatives and other people who were definitely leaning the other way and trying to reach a compromise or to develop some sort of consensus with these people.... It wasn't successful in every case. I remember one fellow came out for two of our focus group meetings and didn't like the way it was going and he didn't show up after that. But by and large, I think there were a lot of diverse opinions that at least had input and got expressed. Learning that process and learning how to deal with different people was ... one of the main things I learned.

Harry expressed some frustration at "one guy [who] always called the GoPlan the no-plan. He didn't really contribute a whole lot. [He had] a negative attitude." Kevin saw some "controversy in the group but [surmised that] a healthy group like that has some controversy, so that's okay. That may be indicative of success, actually, in attracting diverse views and diverse stakeholders." Mark appreciated the process, but saw it as somewhat exclusionary in that he had "yet to see a full community dialogue around ... business leaders, folks like myself and folks like yourself, all getting into talking about it. I don't think we've got to that point yet."

## 2. The Power and Sophistication of Citizen-Led Initiatives

Among the interviewees, there was a widely held belief that the indicator project had been a great success. Interviewees observed that the indicator project was a complex process that delivered a balanced, high quality, sophisticated product. The project demonstrated that citizens can carry out complex and coherent analyses of important issues and communicate them effectively. The project provided a living example of how and why active citizen engagement on important issues should be encouraged and supported.

Alderman George felt that “what the value was, was a group of citizens took on this very sophisticated task.” Armbruster commented, “The remarkable thing is that it was a whole ton of information brought together by volunteers and put into a form that attracted public attention. Information that would normally be difficult to convey to people.”

One interviewee from the municipal government said, “You folks did a very good job at keeping [the indicator report] more balanced.” From his perspective, “The energy of the people, the work that went into that was amazing and the quality of the product was astounding, to put it mildly. It was very impressive ... for a volunteer effort. Better than a lot of paid efforts I’ve seen.”

The comments from two of Sustainable Calgary's co-founders give some perspective to the accomplishment. In Louise's estimation, it was remarkable “that the project did its work so well, so far under the radar screen of so many agencies and people. I think people were shocked to see the extremely professional product from a group of nobodies. No big names were associated with us and yet the work looked great and was well vetted and defensible.” Rachel pointed out that “in retrospect, what we pulled off was two major processes with very little resources, which was quite remarkable [in terms of] cost efficiency. It is outstanding. And at the level of quality, if anything ... when people hear about it they think, Wow! This happened in Calgary?”

### 3. Modest Municipal Government Policy Influence

Before beginning an analysis of the interviews with respect to policy influence, it is instructive to note the description offered by Don, a key policy analyst in the City administration, that policy “is a very messy thing.... At the end of the day you roll over a lot of things in your head and you make a call.” On a more hopeful note, Ron, with extensive experience as an environmental management systems consultant to the City, offered the opinion that “this sustainability project in Calgary [is] a very effective tool in getting focused on where public policy is either missing or weak, or maybe is strong but needs to be maintained.”

*No Evidence of Influence in the Provincial Public Sector or The Private Sector*

Not surprisingly, given the modest involvement of provincial public sector employees and of the business community, the interviews did not reveal any policy influence in the private sector. According to Janet, who has worked extensively for oil companies, "I haven't seen or even heard reference to Sustainable Calgary, to be honest." Likewise, in the provincial public sector, Barb concluded that for the Calgary Health Region, Sustainable Calgary is not really on the radar screen.

*Minor Policy Influence in the Not-for-Profit Sector*

In the not-for-profit sector, there was some evidence of policy influence. Ron sits on Environment Canada's Eco-Action Advisory Board for western Canada. While he hasn't seen "any reference to Sustainable Calgary's work in any particular application," he believes "the dialogue to some extent has changed about what these projects can produce because of what Sustainable Calgary's indicators have revealed for people... The context has changed. You need shower heads, but you have to do other things." When asked whether participation had influenced policy at her funding agency, Emily replied,

Yes. It's probably ... where I started to look outside the environmental sector and started to think that we really needed to include in any of our outreach about funding, or about the environment, the entire community. That in other words, we shouldn't focus just on environmental groups. And right around that time there was a lot of other sustainability stuff going on. I remember sitting with a couple of women who worked at the Y. We had this discussion that it isn't about the environment, it is about where you live, and [that was] the whole genesis of "It's Because It's Our Home" [the funder's slogan]. I can't pin that directly on your workshop, but being there and talking to people who didn't have an environmental background but cared about their quality of life started me down that road. It's an easy sell. Yesterday was our funding round and we gave dollars to Big Brother and Big Sisters of Edmonton for a program to get these urban kids, mostly aboriginal, out to their discovery centre for environmental programming. These kids don't get that from anywhere else and are very receptive to it. So for us, that's a good example of integrating environment into society.

*Modest but Significant Policy Influence within Municipal Government*

By far Sustainable Calgary's strongest policy influence has been within the municipal government. Remembering that policy is messy and diffuse, how can we characterize Sustainable Calgary's influence? A simple model of policy diffusion, depicting actors, structures, and instruments, is helpful to organize the insights of the interviewees.

First, let's look at the actors. Many City employees with a hand in policy participated in the indicator projects, as project team members, sector workshop participants, researchers, or data providers. Most of these people form part of what one interviewee called a "sustainability subculture" internal to the municipal government, beyond which, the interviewee maintained, influence of Sustainable Calgary has not diffused. According to other interviewees familiar with City government, a handful of senior and mid-level managers, and at least six aldermen, have been "engaged" by, are "paying attention" to, or are "talking about" the SCIP. One alderman acknowledged that her participation in the indicator project "certainly helped me understand the triple bottom line a lot quicker." Another alderman recounted how through his involvement with the indicator project, "I guess in a way I was trying to understand if all of that sustainability indicator stuff could be brought into a fairly large organization that wasn't talking that way so much." The alderman went on to explain that

the city just signed on to a network [I imagine Calgary] to plan for long-term urban sustainability. Maybe four years ago ... there were pieces of it ..., people in parts of the organization who were very keen on it, but they weren't united, they weren't connected, and in a little while they have kind of legitimized it in the organization. I don't know if I had a part to play in all of that. I'm not suggesting I have, in any formal sense, but I kind of understand sustainability and I'm supportive of people who want to see if our organization can actually come up with a meaningful strategy ... of reflecting back to sustainability principles.

One of the focal actors in the policy arena at City Hall is an environmental policy analyst and co-founder of Sustainable Calgary. Her influence throughout City government is widely acknowledged by interviewees. In one alderman's assessment, "Rachel influences people in the city. So you hear the conversation, you hear some of the speakers who have been brought to the city from other parts of the world and Rachel's name will be mentioned."

The actors influence policy through various structures of policy design. Sustainable Calgary has had some interaction with several such structures. Chronologically, the first one was the Standing Policy Committee on Community and Protective Services. In 1999 Sustainable Calgary presented its recently released first report to this committee, which endorsed the report and recommended that Sustainable Calgary be invited to participate in any sustainability initiatives of the City. Another increasingly important policy structure is the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC), whose role is to comment on all environmental policy before it goes to the Environment Standing Policy Committee. Sustainable Calgary was invited to join the EAC as an observer in 2002, and in 2004 it became a full member of the committee. Another policy structure with which Sustainable Calgary has had some interaction indirectly is the executive offices, where, according to Cheryl, "how to measure, and indicators, is all we talked about for a year and a half and is still very much the focus of Council and the administration." Cheryl's commentary emphasizes the value of the indicator report itself as "a significant piece of foundational work," particularly in that it serves as a structural model of how to report on performance measurement. Her thoughts help illuminate how the model can have influence in the policy arena:

If administration can understand what the indicator is that you are trying to create and measure, then it is easier to communicate to Council. And Council represents the people. If we are going to change behaviours and activities and even public support for where tax money goes, it has to be in a language that everyone can understand, at an administration level, a Council level, and a public level. So for me, that's where this project can become a very serious model and foundational effort.

When I went to [executive] meetings and we discussed how to put the Council priority document together, how to lay out what our indicators were, how we would measure outcomes, [the indicator project] was an effort in my mind that I kept referring back to, and [that] I kept referring to in group discussions.

Policy is implemented within the municipal government through policy instruments, which are administered by actors. Interviewees identified three policy instruments over which Sustainable Calgary continues to have some influence: the Environmental Management System, and in particular, the ISO 14001 certification process; the Triple Bottom Line reporting

initiative; and I imagine Calgary. The ISO 14001 process influence was very localized. Harvey talked about how shortly after his involvement with the indicator project, Calgary Transit established an environmental management committee with the goal of getting Calgary Transit ISO 14001 certified. He related how "we were one of the first business units in the city to [achieve certification]. A lot of the discussions we had here and the projects we took on, I remember back to the [indicator project], and I got to lend some of my learnings there into the committee to get things done properly."

Performance measurement generally, and the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) reporting initiative in particular, represents the policy instrument where the indicator report has been most relevant. Performance measurement was the foot in the door for the indicator project. Don explains how the indicator report got noticed and how that initial interest continues to influence the TBL initiative:

Certainly we had an interest in the indicator report. We were totally on a ... parallel process at the time. We were in the process of developing performance measures for the City of Calgary. We broke that up and said we need them on a corporate level [and] it would also be useful to have something on a community-based level. So when we found out what Sustainable Calgary was doing, it was like a very nice fit. It was very supportive of what we were trying to do. At that time we even had some ideas about beefing up what we had done by piggy-backing or using this community-based process. Unfortunately, a lot of that got put on hold just because of the organizational review. I think today I'd probably have a lot more awareness of the sustainability part of that, the need to preserve this for generations to come and that kind of thing. And the only reason I'm saying that is because of one of the projects I got involved in late last year ..., a triple bottom line initiative, and I've been heading that up. I don't know if we are solving the sustainability issue, but at least we are trying to bring in social, environmental, and economic issues much more formally into decision-making. So Council reports now require social, economic, and environmental implications of any recommendation that administration puts before council. Looking at it strictly from an indicators point of view to more of a policy framework ..., we have a direction from City Council to recast what they call Council performance measures and make them more relevant. We have much better ones than we had five years ago, thanks to [Sustainable Calgary] and the stuff that Rachel is doing and a few others.

The most current manifestation of the policy influence of the Sustainable Calgary indicator initiative is ImagineCalgary, which represents an unprecedented opportunity for Sustainable Calgary to exert significant influence over policy. ImagineCalgary is the first attempt by the City administration at a systemic, integrated, and community-owned approach to create a long-term vision that will inform Calgary's transportation plan, municipal development plan, and social development plan. Rachel has been one of the key architects of the ImagineCalgary initiative, and Sustainable Calgary has been invited to the table at the beginning of the process. It remains to be seen what role Sustainable Calgary will play in the ImagineCalgary process.

*Reality Check: Limited Profile and Traction of Municipal Government Policy*

Given the potential for Sustainable Calgary to exert a greater influence on policy, it is important to step back and do a reality check on the influence of Sustainable Calgary to date. The above commentary attests to the fact that Sustainable Calgary has established a presence in the policy actor network, the policy structures, and the policy instruments of the municipal government. But the overall assessment of interviewees is that the influence has been modest.

According to one alderman, despite "a lot of interest and a lot of enthusiasm," somehow the indicator report "didn't get the traction ..., didn't quite take hold." Despite acknowledging that the indicator project had the attention of the Chief Commissioner in 1998, Don offered the following comment: "To what extent it permeated upper management? I don't think so. That's my gut feel. I would say if you went to the executive level and mentioned the word 'Sustainable Calgary,' my guess [is that] most of them wouldn't have a clue." Has the report diffused throughout the city? According to Cathy, "I wouldn't say a lot at this point." In reflecting on the report's influence, Alderman Deborah replied, "I couldn't tell you exactly. I don't think I've seen anything specific that I could allude to where it's 'quote' made a difference. Even as a Council member, though the knowledge that I gain from a whole variety of places does impact and influence the decisions I make. It's diffuse."

Alderman George's response to the question of influence was, "I couldn't point to something and say, here's where the indicators have been incorporated into the way the City does business." While he perceives that "concerns about the environment are more prominent than they were six or seven years ago," the extent to which that awareness is "attributable to the work of [Sustainable Calgary], I couldn't say, because it is coming at us now from so many other directions." The following passages from George's interview were insightful in terms of the dilemma Sustainable Calgary faces in achieving, and even recognizing, significant policy influence. "[The report] has to grab the attention of a municipal government champion, it has to resonate with the priorities of the municipal government, and there must be some sense that it is doable.

Maybe [it's] the nature of my job - it's both responsive and reactive in a sense. People come and they say they've got this idea and present it.... Or they have an issue or a problem or something that needs attending to, so you try to respond to that and as long as that pressure is there, you continue to respond. The other part of it is sort of around a leadership or initiative-taking role, and that's where you feel there's something here that needs attending to. [So] of your own personal priorities, you take it on as an issue to champion. So I guess in the case of this particular project, Sustainable Calgary was not hounding us or advocating or promoting this on an ongoing basis and keeping it in view. If no one is making it an issue, there are lots of other people over here making noise about other issues that kind of distracts your attention. I could see where it fits ... [but] being a champion for it somehow didn't resonate with whatever were priorities for me at the time. I forgot about it.

There hasn't been a strong sense of urgency around here about the importance of performance measures. People aren't sure of the relevance of it - is it an add-on to what they are doing? ... I really do see the value and merit of performance measurement, [but] you also need a critical mass of people who think it is important. If you are the only member of Council who seems to be asking questions about it and nobody in administration really seems to be a champion of it either, it withers.

The other problem with community measures is what piece of it is the city responsible for and what piece is somebody else responsible for. It is hard enough aligning efforts within one complicated bureaucracy like the City of Calgary, [but] to then add to that the coordination, co-operation and alignment with the Health Region and the City, the Calgary Board of Education and the City, other institutions and community groups - it seemed like a monumental task. When you don't have time for other tasks, a monumental task seems too remote to take on.

The last word on policy influence goes to Ron. During his interview, he asked rhetorically, “Has [the indicator project] changed activities, thinking and commitment [at City Hall]?” He answered, “I believe it has.”

#### 4. A Benchmark for Indicators and Performance Measurement

Interviewee comments recorded in the previous section allude to the foundational model the Sustainable Calgary indicator project provides. Throughout the interviews, the most common descriptor of the status of the indicator report was “benchmark.”

Bruce talked about how the “document, at the end of the day, was really useful.... To be able to say this is a snapshot of where we are today and kind of look at progress or lack of progress years down the road. A benchmark was being drawn and we were on a journey together to say, in a while we’ll do this again and see if we have improved or not.” He continued, “I can remember some discussions around the Council table and the report being brought up.... In a way it led thinking around outcome measures. Logic model stuff.” Barb, from the Calgary Health Region, spoke about the indicator report as something “tangible that could put some substance to what we were talking about. It is a very ambitious initiative because it is tough to get indicators or systems that aggregate – and collect [the data]. I think you have raised an awareness and benchmark for the community.” Cheryl acknowledged that “it’s become a real example to me how to lay out an indicator.... If the staff can understand it, they can say, yeah, that’s measurable and you can put it on a piece of paper and check it for progress throughout the year and say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to it at the end of the year.... [It’s a] significant foundational piece.”

Janet described the pioneering and unique ‘philosophy’ of the reports in that “It is more important to find a good area to measure even if it’s really difficult to measure. I remember that as a strong thing: we’re not just going to go for easy measures.” She also reflected on the significance of the report in her facilitation work and for the wider community. “It has been part of my own development and ability to ask better questions [of] groups that are struggling around the same issues. We shouldn’t underestimate that actually, because there is

a time when there is a desire to do something, but could anyone even do it? I guess in my mind Sustainable Calgary is one of the first who did it. It is possible. An aha! A pioneer.”

From the point of view of municipal government, Rachel put the continued benchmark value of the indicator report in perspective. “The City of Calgary has yet to get indicators right – to do it well. In that context [the] indicators report stands up as a good example. On the City side, it is still a big mess. We have a corporate goal of creating a corporate reporting framework. [City officials] have a sense of, here’s a way of doing this stuff. Especially on the community side, you could argue, why would the City think of other [indicator sets] when that’s been done [by Sustainable Calgary]?”

#### 5. Contribution to an Emerging Progressive Sustainability Network

In 1996 Sustainable Calgary was fairly unique in its focus on urban sustainability. As such, it was a meeting place for people interested in working on urban sustainability. The process of citizen engagement and dialogue facilitated network building; many participants remarked on how the process had allowed them to create new relationships with fellow participants and connected them with new organizations and networks.

George commented that in his opinion, “the value of [the indicator report] is the network of people who came around the work as opposed to the work itself, the indicators themselves.” In responding to the question of project outcomes at a personal level, Karen commented,

I have actually met some people through volunteering for the indicators.... I don’t see them on a regular basis, but when we do see each other, we have so much in common that it’s really nice. So it actually introduced different people – to be able to build a larger network.... So you know when you are all depressed about all the stuff going on in the city and you read those great quotes from the mayor, you can think of those people and realize they’re out there. You know that there are people who do care and are interested in the same issues.

Similarly, John mused that “I think some people that are in my life now, I probably met during that process. So just the association with those people – and that’s nice.” Maya reflected that

“often when you are not acting from the status quo or you don't think you are, you feel isolated. So personally, it was just good to connect with other people that are working toward similar goals.”

#### 6. Contribution to an Enabling Environment for Achieving Sustainability

Outcome four concerned the influence of the indicator report in the specific context of policy design and implementation within the municipal government. In a wider context, the project has played a significant role in contributing to an enabling environment for accelerated movement toward sustainability, including in the policy arena.

Ron believed that the indicator initiative “has actually created a change of mind at City Hall within the staff administration and also senior management.” Rachel expressed the same sentiment in terms of the indicator report “contributing to a culture shift.” Joy couldn't “point to precise things that were done,” but she felt “really comfortable that it planted seeds and got people thinking” and that, in fact, she has seen “more movement and more discussion on the topic at all levels of government and industry.” Karen thought that it “gives you more credibility if you can talk about something and say oh! There is an interesting report out....”

Krista talked about the way the Dover Sustainability Report had influenced activities in her community:

In the newsletter, we talk about our multi-cultural program. It was a direct result of our study.... It came out of the sustainability study as a need and we went to a meeting of Our Communities, Our Voices that Diane Danielson puts on once a year. It came out that a lot of the communities in the area felt like they weren't really reaching the cultural groups. So we decided we wanted to get a person on our board. We want to [ask], is our information that we put out culturally friendly and sensitive? Do we use culturally sensitive drawings in our newsletter? We have a lot of Sudanese people move into our community. We had to develop a knowledge and understanding of the people who are our neighbours.

Harvey described how the report was helpful for him during Calgary Transit discussions of the kinds of success stories to post to its Web site. “I did mention more than once at the

table, 'Look, we've got the Sustainable Calgary group out there and these are the kinds of things they're looking for and these are some of the indicators.' So it ties in nice to our success stories." Deborah identified the importance of learning a new language. "People are just starting to realize what sustainability means, and part of that is the influence from the report. Just having the word 'sustainability' up there. People are starting to talk about it. Building the capacity of people. Over time it becomes part of the language and there is a common understanding of it." George talked about how in "politics ... you create a climate."

You do things and you don't know what impact it is going to have, and it is intangible sometimes. You create a climate that gives people permission to do things that people weren't thinking they would do, or sure they should do, or didn't know if they wanted to take the risk of doing. And by golly, here's this group of citizens doing something, and it creates a climate of acceptance.... When I think of what the City of Calgary has done in the environment - we have gotten a lot of cudors in the last couple of years and I'm thinking it is all part of building a climate of acceptance. Even though those indicators themselves may have fallen by the wayside. It may not have been executed well on the advocacy side, but it has planted a seed, planted ideas, given people permission, and [the] impacts, we can't really measure.

## 7. A Valuable Reference Document

Interview questions were designed to explore the extent to which the State of Our City report was being used. Consideration of the interview results suggests that to a modest extent, the report is a living document in the sense that it is not merely sitting on shelves. It was designed to be a reference, a planning and policy tool, and an education tool. To some extent, it is being put to those ends. One area where it is clear the document does not have a profile is the business community. John works in the private sector and commented that "definitely at the corporate level, I haven't seen it.". Reesa confirmed that observation: "When I was involved in the private sector, nobody talked about it."

But in the public and not-for-profit sectors, there is evidence that the report is an accessible, living document that has some purchase as a planning and education tool. Karen said that she feels "people can learn from it.... It's accessible ... [and] it's really readable." According to Barb, "I know when I am out in the community I hear people talking about it.

They refer to it. So it isn't a dead document that went on the shelf and no one ever heard about." Mahmoud spoke of "us[ing] it personally" and said that it was "something to communicate with other new immigrants, or with Canadians." Jackie, on the other hand, reported, "To my knowledge, it is not really being use in United Way. I think that there might have been a few staff initially in focus groups [who] had been aware of it and had reports in their offices." Cathy, a city planner, felt that it "was an excellent product [and] a good source book" and that she had "made reference to the report in some of [her] work." But she tempered that assessment with the statement that "it's starting to get dated ... [and] to be honest, it's been a while since I referred to it."

Some interviewees were very specific about how they had used the report. Marlino, for example, said, "Yes, I use the report a lot, especially, for instance, the indicator on valuing cultural diversity. It is very good because you have the statistics and the indicator to use to actually talk about something that you know is happening ..., to say that we need more interventions ..., [and for] policy and planning and project identification."

Maya took it upon herself to disseminate the report through her organic produce delivery business. "I definitely spoke with a lot of people who had a little bit of interest, a few hundred people. There are a few copies at the warehouse. Our customers, some of them phoned and said 'this is great! I had no idea that this is going on.' It was a good role for our business to play in the city."

Emily works for a provincial funding agency and has "given this book or referred this book to probably thirty people in the last few years. Even people in Fort McMurray and in Lethbridge – people who work for other municipalities and really specifically sustainable development. I do send people to your Web site because we don't have copies any more."

## 8. A Tool for Sustainability Educators

For several interviewees, a significant benefit of participation in the indicator project has been the opportunity to use their experience of the process and the report as teaching tools. For some, the report and the sustainability conceptual framework provided the content for

teaching activities, while for others, the process provided the opportunity to reflect upon their role as formal and informal adult educators. Some reported that the act of teaching obligated them to challenge and deepen their own understanding of sustainability. The teaching venues where these interviewees practiced ranged from the workplace, to social movements, to formal post-secondary educational institutions.

Emily used her participation in the project as an opportunity to reflect on her role as an informal educator. Her contact with participants from other sectors reinforced her sense of the “responsibility” you carry when “you become the educator.”

It's a bit of a responsibility because you don't want to alienate people. You don't want to ram [the environment] down their throat. It's a chance for you to figure out how much you know and how rational you can be about an idea or an issue and clearly understand how others, who don't have the same set of experiences, feel. For me it creates ... opportunities to direct education or direct communication towards filling those kinds of gaps.... I've found over the last eight years or so that there is a lot of stigma attached to environmental language. I don't use the word environment. [I] use, for example, quality of life – people are much more eager to talk about that. When you use the word environment ..., I don't know if they think about what that might mean. But it might be bad, might be contentious.

Jake talked about his role as a teacher in his workplace and how he has “gone on to try to teach some of the things I've learned. In my own office, I've given a presentation on this sustainability indicator project. Some people that have moved to Calgary can learn a little bit more about their city and eventually come and take on projects with Sustainable Calgary. I know three people in the office who have done so.... I continue to read up on sustainability, infuse it in my daily practice and projects that I work on ..., try to teach the meaning of sustainability to some of my clients.”

Bill, an adult educator, worked as a workshop facilitator in the 2001 report process and has since become a faculty member for the Audobon Environmental Studies program. The most remarkable aspect of the project for him personally was that “the act of doing the workshops ..., the act of sharing the knowledge ..., the act of teaching” contributed to a “deepening” of his knowledge. Bill spoke of how the project “shaped me as an educator”:

Because of this process, I probably kept shifting toward doing more community development type of education.... It's probably shaped me to be a much stronger advocate or educated activist when it comes to the urban context of ecology. I know it has made me happier about living in the city.... There's a lot more focus [for me] on urban ecology. Definitely this was one of my ... strong shapers. So when it comes to the third semester graduate program [environmental studies at Audobon] as an example, I am the one who put up my hand and said, [I] will organize the students around the urban ecology experience in Boston.

Similarly for Rachel, the preparation for and act of teaching is an opportunity to deepen her own understanding of sustainability. Rachel taught a community sustainability course at the University of Calgary, Faculty of Environmental Design. The course was an opportunity to introduce sustainability to a group of future planning and environmental professionals:

It was great to be able to teach that course for me because I got a chance to really think about those things and how do you present that to students. As much as it was a lot of work, it was also a neat time to do a bit of integration. And you get more and more confident.... Does it stand up? How do I say this? Is this making any sense? So there was probably a lot more value in the advocating side and learning to do that than I really appreciated.

#### 9. Catalyst for New Research and Projects

Clearly, the indicators project has catalyzed new community research. The most noteworthy example of this is the Sense of Community initiative, which identified a data gap and insufficient understanding of sense of community. On the strength of the 1998 report, Sustainable Calgary convened a group of agencies to develop a survey tool to assess sense of community in Calgary. The City of Calgary, the United Way of Calgary and Area, the Calgary Foundation and the Calgary Health Region all participated in the project. The Sense of Community indicator project continues to function under the leadership of City of Calgary staff. After the 1998 State of Our City Report, Sustainable Calgary took a lead role in undertaking independent research on what we had designated as "Indicators in Progress: Sense of Community, Valuing Cultural Diversity and Economic Diversification. Many of these initiatives were discussed during the thirty-two participant interviews. The commentaries of interviewees on three of these research initiatives – Dover, Sense of Community, and Safer

Cities – was particularly engaging and illustrative of the spin-off effects of the original indicator project.

Mary, of the Calgary Volunteer Centre, was involved in the sense of community survey instrument development, which is still a work in progress. Mary pointed out that “[Volunteer Calgary] doesn’t do research about that. We don’t have the capacity.” Her comments demonstrate the kind of dialogue and debate that this initiative has fostered. She talked about how “two pieces have come out of that sense of community ... that have stuck with me like glue”: looking at intervention in communities with low rates of voluntarism and increasing the participation of the trades in volunteer activities.

It was a very good survey and the data was there and interesting. You look at it very carefully and could say, Gee! It’s really very interesting that we’ve got a number of communities here with really, really low rates of volunteerism. And these are communities that are high-needs communities. Does that mean there is a lack of connectivity in that community? And maybe we need to be doing something in those four communities to encourage people to be more engaged in their community. We tried to look at it this morning in terms of how do you do that.... It has to be something that inspires those communities to take on their own issues.... None of us are as skilled in true blue community development as we probably need to be. And so that was an interesting result of that survey.

It was identified in the sense of community survey that the industry group that volunteers least is the trades. Well, we just finished sitting on a big committee for a world skills international [bid] that was driven by SAIT. I was thrilled to be there because I went right back to what I learned in sense of community. What a great opportunity for Volunteer Calgary. Every single major event in this community has volunteers involved, but we never, ever leave a legacy for volunteerism. If there is some legacy where we could involve ... trades students, technology students in world trade international, so they get a few jollies from volunteering.... We can look at that strategically so those young people [have] the leadership building piece integrated into some of the work. How great is that?

There are, of course, questions about how to measure sense of community. Also, once it is measured, what does one do in a community that scores a low sense of community? This also raises issues about our capacity to quantify qualitative aspects of our lives, such as values and volunteerism. Again, in Mary’s words:

[A lot of trades actually volunteer a lot of time] so that makes you even think about, in terms of sense of community, what questions are you asking. We fussed and fumed around whether we should even ask any questions about volunteerism because again it's the formalized "going some place to do something" that is probably outlined for you versus all that other [informal volunteerism] we don't have any input on. I don't want to call what my plumber neighbour does to help me volunteerism. I mean he is being a good neighbour and good friend. That's why the measuring piece in terms of the State of Our City at a neighbourhood level, it offends me, 'cause if we have to measure everything we are not going in the right direction. We get so immersed in credibility and measurability based on the private sector.... We don't have any matrices. We don't know how to measure that other stuff. And we stay away from it 'cause we don't. We don't stand up for it. When I do a presentation on putting economic value on volunteers, I always say to people, I always ask them a lot of questions ... generally focused on values. Do you put an economic measure on those? And people don't. They are all what we tend to call soft.

Krista was the key driver behind the Dover Community Indicator Project, funded by the Neighbourhood Grants project of the Calgary Foundation. The Dover project was adapted from the city-wide SCIP. Sustainable Calgary was approached to assist the Dover Community Association with a land-use dispute with the City of Calgary. Eventually the Dover Community Association agreed to broaden their perspective to look at the sustainability of the community and not just the land-use issue. The indicator project led to two new community initiatives and at least a partial resolution of the land-use issue. In Krista's words,

I came into [the sustainability study] with this specific thing that we were going to address this land-use thing. And decided that report was going to say we need to have more of a ... we call it move-up housing ... that's what we call it in our community. And what's come out of that sustainability study is that we've gone forward with the whole multi-cultural, cultural diversity piece - which has been very surprising to me.... Now we have a cultural diversity member on our board. They have been meeting with different groups in the community. We are trying to look at making ourselves more culturally friendly, translating some sports forms, in terms of having interpreters available.

And then the trees. One of the [Dover] indicators was the number of trees, and today in the park they are planting three hundred more trees.... Somehow there was some extra money so [Calgary Parks and Recreation] phoned us and said, do you want some trees? We said yes. Yesterday they started.... And as a community we are getting three dozen trees to be planted around our Hall and

we are doing that on June 16<sup>th</sup>. And again, part of the thinking about trees came from that report. Those two things were things I never thought would go and they did. ...

The land use issues are still a struggle, although we are making really good progress. Carma needed some land in the south and the city had some land, so they swapped. Carma was interested in the sustainability report. They wanted to look at what the people in the community say they wanted. So [Carma is] really excited about doing some high-end developments. At the other end of the park, some townhouses are going in. Habitat for Humanity is putting in a development. We were asked to support that and we said we support anything that is owner-occupied, based on our sustainability report.... We do need a mix of housing in our community although one of the things we talked about [in the report] was the need for more affordable housing. We feel we have done our contribution with the Habitat for Humanity development.

A third project is the Safer City initiative, a multi-stakeholder initiative instigated through the City of Calgary. Through the Safer City initiative, Calgary has become the first Canadian city to be designated by the World Health Organization as a Safer City. Cheryl coordinated the initiative during the creation of its indicator report. In her interview, she talked about the influence the SCIP had on her work.

When I was working with the Safer City project ... there was a very keen interest in looking at how to measure the success of the Safer City project, and the first thing that came to my mind was the [Sustainable Calgary] indicator project. It was a really nice fit.... On a personal level, the lesson [from the Sustainable Calgary indicator project] for me was that you can make it easy to understand how to measure something and put it into a language that others can understand and buy into and maybe contribute to. So that learning for me I took to the Safer City project when we did the background indicator work for it.... It's become a real example to me how to lay out an indicator. If the staff can understand it, they can say, yeah, that's measurable, and you can put it on a piece of paper and check it for progress throughout the year and say yes or no to it at the end of the year.... [The Sustainable Calgary indicator project] became a significant piece of foundational work that I've used time and time again as a reference when I'm working with people at the City.

## Section D: Improving the Process

Interviewees were asked to comment on how the process could have been improved. Responses can be organized into five broad categories: articulation of project goals, preparation of participants, broader participation, exclusion within the process, and dissemination of results.

### Articulation of Project Goals

Ron felt that “the sort of definition of success for this was never at the beginning very clear. It evolved. It would be very helpful to try to articulate where we want to be – what does success look like. It doesn’t mean it is an end point ..., but it has to be more clearly articulated for more people than to join in.” Deborah’s comments about the loose structure of the sector working groups resonated with the theme of articulation of project goals: “You have to balance [the process] for those who like structure.... I would imagine some dropped out after the first session because they like the structure.”

### Preparation of Participants

Some interviewees felt that the process might have been improved by more preparation of participants: for example, Barb thought that the process might have been improved by “maybe helping people understand what data is available.” Armbruster commented that “we have many other cities to reflect upon, [and] giving that sort of perspective at the front end would probably open minds and generate energy above and beyond what was there.” Janet reflected how in the second report process, “it felt like we were starting from scratch [without] so much building from the first report.”

### Broader Participation

Conrad posed the question, “What proportion of Calgarians even know about Sustainable Calgary and how do we improve that?” Most interviewees offered thoughts on how to increase participation of the broader public, people from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds, under-represented partners, and stakeholders and decision-makers. While recognizing the substantial participation, John mused that “if you get ten thousand people, then that is really substantial.” Marlino thought that “one way of having a multiplier effect [would be] to partner with groups who are active ... for instance, with the ethnocultural council. I am sure they would

be more than willing to partner, maybe [host] a workshop, to fine tune the [valuing cultural diversity] indicator" and then use "indicators that emerge from the partners." Speaking from a familiarity with "adult education history" and "the co-operatives movement in the Maritimes," Bill felt the participation of marginalized groups might require "really strategically draw[ing] in and seek[ing] out folks who could speak from or have some experience speaking with immigrant communities ... and maybe doing some sort of training and coaching." He acknowledged that "it may take some extra effort or extra money."

Rob wondered if the process had "engaged corporations or attempted to, [because] that might draw out a lot of other people, [or] if you could move it into community associations." Don suggested that the project had to "figure out a way of getting involvement of higher up people. It's great that it was grassroots, honestly, and that's where the work gets done, but at the end of the day ..., put some heavy hitters on there." Armbruster thought that "in an ideal world we should be able to get the organizations that we may be gathering information from to be more engaged themselves in that sustainability project." Then those organizations could "use the project as a platform to cast their issues in a larger context." Interviewees also talked about the need to make the process "more available electronically, not just the final report, but the process itself"; they suggested that Sustainable Calgary could "use the Web site much more interactively." Kevin felt that "we probably tried to do it too fast. People have to agree on what has to be done. They've gotta have time to unload and work together." Bill felt that bringing a stronger element of celebration into the process might enhance participation. Janet introduced a process methodology called spiral dynamics:

I've done planning with twenty or forty people in the room in the spirit of engaging and involving everyone, and I do think that the quality of the thinking or the strategies of the action plan is less. You sacrifice boldness usually or the courageousness for the sake of involvement and engagement. So I was thinking about your process in that same sense that - it's awful to say because it sounds elitist - but you would want perhaps the brightest minds or the most forward-looking people to be engaged and then perhaps a broader involvement around ... gathering the data.

Conrad expressed a unique perspective on how to broaden participation. He spoke passionately about the need to "re-establish the connections [with] conservatism":

If you really truly were conservative, then our principles are much more in line with those of sustainability advocates than they are of the spend and consume and destroy mentality that seems right now conservatives are backing. There is nothing more conservative ... [than] traditional values like reverence toward others and humility and modesty. If you asked ... Steven Harper what a conservative is, I don't think any of them would have those kinds of ideas. It's been the great American train robbery. If [traditional conservatism] could be brought forward you would find a lot more Albertans, a lot more Calgarians excited about a sustainability project. It's something I find really compelling. How do we show that what is passing for conservatism now is really opportunism and greed and corporatism.

#### Exclusion within the Process

The flip side of participation is exclusion. Even though for the most part interviewees felt that the process had "a high degree of professionalism" and "got people engaged...[and] thinking," some interviewees talked at length about discomfort with instances of exclusion from the process. Maya volunteered as a facilitator for the community sector working group during the preparation of the second State of Our City Report. She was uncomfortable with the way a contingent of participants from the arts community had been excluded:

I definitely felt that the participants in the community [working group] were quite disappointed.... [The process] ended up actually breaking down the community [working group]. The arts people got shunted, definitely, and they were very active, very committed participants. I felt that their participation was almost negated by that process. And we did try to talk through that. And if we can only vote.... Even the dotmocracy is exclusive. I can't honestly propose a different way of choosing [the indicators] but ... I was aware at the time that it was exclusive, the same as our political system. [You] lose interest because there was a negation of your voice. Maybe [the arts community participants] needed more time to present why their choices were important to them. Because I think some of the other [indicators] were more obvious to the general population and theirs maybe wasn't represented enough. Maybe it was a time issue. [They proposed] arts in schools [as the indicator]. And I agreed with them [but] as a facilitator I tried not to sway the crowd.

Mark spoke about his personal experience of exclusion in the process:

At the end of the day, I was one voice that represented the business side. It becomes a bit of a challenge. I remember talking to [my wife] and saying it was ... a real challenge for me.... I'd hear folks say, well, XYZ, this is the way it should be. I don't want to be the only person saying that [I have a different perspective, and others thinking,] ... who brought the idiot.

Bill offered an opinion about how to deal with these instances of exclusion:

Consensus. I don't know if consensus is needed. It might need some real teaching to get there. If there is a way to say up front we are missing certain aspects.... So coming in to a process and saying we know we need an arts indicator. I don't know if that is twisting the process too much or tweaking it. But there are certain spots of strategic engagement of getting certain groups involved. That might be a way. Is that a way to get into the corporate workplace, by really targeting [an indicator] that just might draw and getting them strategically engaged? Because the more groups you can engage in this, it seems, the more power it can have.

As a person with a learning disability, Fred also raised an important aspect of exclusion that, in fact, echoes several other interviewees quoted above:

Some of it didn't make any sense to me - some of the ideas. Trying to see where they all fit in. It was a little bit complicated for me to understand. Everybody was learning at a different level.... The dotmocracy I found a little hard. Okay, where do we put this, where do we put that. I have only so many [sticky dots] to put into that. It was very hard to choose the ones that we wanted that really made some sense. I found it really hard. I don't know if there is a better way to do this. 'Cause we didn't really have a lot of time to think, how are we going to do this or how are we going to do that.

### Dissemination of Results

A final theme under process improvement is dissemination of results. The interviews focused on two issues: marketing the product and post-report advocacy. To improve the marketing, Reesa suggested, "You really have to pretty it up and dress it up - more graphics." Rachel talked about the need for "communications on all sorts of fronts," and in particular, "enhanced communication with funders - bringing them in as partners." Emily, a representative of one of the project's funders, focused on the need for post-report advocacy:

To tell you the truth, I always thought that where the [reports] left off, Sustainable Calgary should have picked up. I wish you guys had more capacity as an organization. I feel that Calgary ... considering the leadership we have at the municipal government level, [leadership] doesn't appear anywhere else. There is a real lack of environmental groups and especially urban issues groups in Calgary. There is no one to take a lead in engaging other sectors, and I find that very frustrating.

The importance of Emily's words were validated in the interview with Deborah, a City alderman:

I still think we might have prioritized more, to key in on some indicators that really are the red flags. I think disseminating the information was tough. It was tough the first time around getting the first report together, but the real meaning is disseminating the information and making people realize that it's an accountability measure.... Everybody, whether you are a public institution, a private industry, or an individual, should take some ownership in it to improve the statistics so that our outcome is in fact that we have a sustainable city.

## Appendix One: Strategies to Achieve Research Rigour

In this research, I employed the following strategies to satisfy myself and external reviewers and readers that the research is in fact rigorous and that the findings are plausible and worthy of attention.

### Contextualization

Contextualization of this qualitative research is provided in large measure through the Sustainable Calgary story, which documents the creation and evolution of the indicator initiative.<sup>6</sup> With this contextualization, questions of transferability can be addressed. Comparison with other initiatives can be made and variances in the findings across initiatives can at least in part be accounted for by differences in the context of each initiative. Fortunately, the transferability of this indicator initiative outcomes research can be tested by comparing it to the indicator initiative most similar to Calgary's – Sustainable Seattle. An investigation of the outcomes of the Seattle process, similar in design to this research, was recently conducted as part of the PhD dissertation of Dr. Meg Holden of Simon Fraser University.<sup>7</sup>

### Selection of Interviewees

Reliability and validity of qualitative research is in part dependent on the interviewee selection procedures. The researcher must ponder whether or not the selected interviewees provide a representative account of the outcomes of the indicator project. In this research, there is a balance or trade-off between two unique aspects of the research. On the one hand, the research attempts to give an accurate assessment of personal outcomes for participants in the process. In this respect, ideally, a more random sampling of interviewees would avoid selection biases that result in the recruitment only of individuals known to have experienced significant personal benefits. On the other hand, the research is attempting to uncover as much information as possible about the wider impact of the indicator initiative. This can be accomplished best with a purposive recruitment of interviewees. These two objectives are at

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<sup>6</sup> The Story can be found on the Sustainable Calgary website – [sustainablecalgary.ca](http://sustainablecalgary.ca).

<sup>7</sup> Meg Holden (2005) A Pragmatic Test of Sustainability Indicators: The Case of Sustainable Seattle

cross-purposes, and this research design has necessarily sought a compromise between these two objectives by establishing criteria for achieving representativeness of the interview group and for creating procedures for purposive sampling. For this research an initial invitation posted to the Sustainable Calgary website yielded no responses. Interviewees were selected from a list of former participants generated from the lead researchers indicator project records. Final selections were made based on the lead researchers assessment of the likelihood that a particular participant would have significant outcomes to report and the desire to achieve a representative sample of participants with respect to age, gender, length of residence in Calgary, place of residence in Calgary and ethnic origin. Since no two selected groups will ever be identical, external validation of the research findings has limitations.

#### Building Relationships of Trust

As noted previously, success in qualitative research is as much a communicative accomplishment supported by the establishment of ethical relations as it is an analytical accomplishment. Part of ethical relations is the researcher's status position, which can affect external reliability. In this instance, the lead researcher was a co-founder of Sustainable Calgary and co-author of the State of Our City reports, facts known to the interviewees. This status has both negative and positive possibilities. On the negative side, the researcher runs the risk that he is too close to the process to be critically and reflexively subjective. There is also the risk that participants will tend to be more positive in their assessments of the initiative given the status of the interviewer. On the positive side, the researcher is intimately familiar with the project and already has a relationship with the interviewees, enhancing the opportunity for deeper discussion during the interviews. The researcher can also bring much more experience to bear on the interpretation of the interviews than someone with no history with the initiative. In this research, I had a prior relationship with all of the interviewees. With respect to establishing trust, I would infer some measure of trust embodied in that relationship simply from the fact that interviewees responded to the personal invitation to be interviewed. Furthermore, the ethical research protocols of the University of Calgary were instrumental in establishing transparency in the research process – an important aspect of building and maintaining trust.

### Disciplined Subjectivity

One of the biggest challenges to the researcher attempting to represent the authentic experience of interviewees is to maintain what Baxter and Eyles (1997) refer to as “disciplined subjectivity” (510). It is practically impossible and, I would argue, undesirable for a researcher to bracket out his or her subjectivity. Yet a reflexive posture toward the research process allows the researcher to ensure that his or her biases do not prevent an unencumbered exploration of the research question or interpretation of the interviewees’ comments. In this instance, I kept a journal of my own reflections on the research process as it proceeded as a method of invoking my own disciplined subjectivity. The journal entries were used as a method of systematically reflecting on my own subjectivity as I recorded post-interview notes.

### Natural Setting

Internal validity depends in part on the naturalness of the setting of the interviews. I requested that the interviewees choose the location for the interview in order to make the setting as comfortable and convenient as possible for them. Some chose to conduct the interview in their place of work, while others were comfortable coming to my office; others invited me to their homes for the interview. All interviews were conducted one-on-one in private. One obstacle to achieving internal validity is the fact that it had been at least two years since interviewees had been engaged in the indicator project. Several interviewees mentioned the difficulty in recalling events or attributing personal change or change in the community to the project, given the passage of time since they had participated in the initiative. This difficulty probably resulted in an underestimation of attributions, and less anecdotal evidence of specific instances of personal change as a result of involvement in the project, than would have been the case if for example participants had been encouraged to keep a journal during their participation in the indicator project.

### Participation in the Research Process

Among the strategies for obtaining internal reliability is that of carrying out the research in collaboration with participant researchers or multiple researchers, and through peer

examination. For this research, the indicator project outcomes research methodology and the semi-structured interview guide questions were reviewed by and discussed with my academic supervisor and the members of the Outcomes Research project steering committee (my peers). Formally, I was the lead researcher, but as explained previously, the Eco-PAR approach takes the position that the community of participants are co-researchers. As lead researcher, I made efforts to ensure transparency of the research process during interviewing and through the group workshop following preliminary analysis by providing the draft report to the interviewees for final comment and validation.

#### Co-Researcher Validation

As has been mentioned, validity is the strong suit of qualitative research. An important strategy to ensure validity in qualitative research is to request that interviewees validate the analysis and findings of the researcher in order to confirm that the analysis and findings accurately represent their perspectives and that quotations are not misused or misinterpreted. Giving interviewees the opportunity to review the draft report also facilitates the learning process of all co-researchers, what Lincoln and Guba (2000, 180) call the “educative validity”. Ideally, each interviewee and the researcher will gain new insight into the phenomenon under study as a result of exposure to the words and analyses of the other interviewees and the researcher.

#### Group Validation

A foundational principle of PAR is participation. An ontological and epistemological assumption of PAR is that knowledge is dialogically co-created, that any individual perspective is partial and thus poly-angulation will achieve a better approximation of reality. The group validation process was designed with these assumptions in mind.

#### Documentation of the Research Process

External reliability and confirmability depend on the availability of materials for audit. In this case, the following materials are available for a potential audit: invitations to participate in the research, consent forms, audio-recordings of the raw data, post-interview researcher

notes, data interpretation notes, group workshop notes, and interviewees' electronic responses to the request to review and validate the final analysis. The requirement for confidentiality is a constraint on the theoretical availability of research materials.

#### Mechanical Recording of Interviews

Reliability and validity is also enhanced by mechanically recording interviews, since direct access to the audio of the interview is a significant aid to analysis. The decision was made in the research design to audio-record each of the thirty-two interviews.

#### Minimize Mediation in Data Manipulation and Analysis

It is my belief that authenticity of qualitative research can be enhanced by the researcher becoming immersed in and intimately familiar with the available data. Every opportunity to interact with the data enhances that immersion and intimacy. For this reason, I chose to minimize technologies that mediate between the researcher and the data. In particular, I chose not to have an external person transcribe the interviews and not to use ethnographic coding software.

#### Low-inference Descriptors

The reliability of research is enhanced by the use of low-inference descriptors. High inference-making occurs when the researcher infers that interviewees' own concepts or themes (i.e. the words they use) are substitutable by or can be gathered by the interviewer's own chosen words. In this research the concepts or descriptors used were drawn as much as possible directly from interviewees' own comments.

#### Detailed Profile of the Interviewee Group

Assessment of external validity (comparable findings across another sample) and transferability (comparable findings in another city) requires that a detailed profile of the interviewed group be documented so that differences in findings from group to group might be explained.

### Polyvocality

Since, in the PAR paradigm, all perspectives are partial, I have presented as many voices as possible in the research analysis. In fact, all interviewees are represented in the analysis. While using real names in the text may assist a reader to assess the rigour, plausibility, and worth of the research, it would be in violation of the ethical commitment to confidentiality. As a compromise, all interviewees agreed for their quotations to be attributed to an alias. In this way, confidentiality can be maintained, but at the same time a reader will be able to follow the thinking of individuals through the entire research report. This format will also allow the reader to compare the researchers' interpretations with the interviewee statements used to arrive at those interpretations. This approach aids the assessment of reliability, validity, and confirmability of the research findings.

### Inclusion of Negative Cases

According to Baxter and Eyles (1997), external validity can be enhanced by the inclusion of negative case analysis. In this research, negative or contrary interpretations of themes and concepts are presented alongside the dominant interpretations whenever negative or contrary views were expressed by interviewees.

## Appendix Two: Interview Guide Questions

### Participant Profile

Name/Coded

Gender:

Age:

Community:

Occupation:

Length of Residence in Calgary:

Ethnic Affiliation:

Organizational Affiliation:

Sectoral Affiliation:

Education:

### Guiding Questions

How would you describe your knowledge of sustainability prior to your participation in the Sustainable Calgary indicator project?

Was this the first time you participated in a sustainability initiative?

If not the first time, how have you been involved in the past?

How did you find out about the SC indicator project?

Why did you get involved in the SC indicator project?

Describe the nature of your involvement (time period, role, hours invested)

What has been the most remarkable aspect of the SC indicator project?

Has your participation benefited you personally? How?

Has your participation benefited you professionally? How?

Has your participation increased your understanding of sustainability?

Has your participation resulted in attitude change re: sustainability?

Has your participation resulted in behaviour change re: sustainability?

Did you enjoy your participation in the project?

What do you think you contributed to the project/process?

What was the most remarkable aspect of your participation?

How could the process have been improved?

Have you become an advocate for sustainability in your home, neighbourhood, community, workplace, city, province, country or globally as result of your involvement with the SC indicator project? If so how?

How would you characterize the participants in the process?

Who do you think was missing or underrepresented in the process?

Interview Protocol Page 2

Can you give us your opinion about the sustainability of Calgary? (ecological, social, economic and political). Calgary is sustainable? Calgary is moving strongly, weakly or moderately toward sustainability? Calgary is spinning its Wheels? Calgary is moving strongly, moderately or weakly away from sustainability?

What do you think are the most pressing sustainability issues for the city of Calgary?

What are the biggest impediments to achieving sustainability in Calgary? (ecological, social, economic, political)

Has the SC report resulted in movement toward sustainability in the city? On the part of government, private sector, not-for profits. (with respect to Rhetoric, Discourse, Attitudes, Behaviour, Policy, Planning, Projects, Programs, Structures, Collaboration)

24. Can you suggest other individuals who may have of impacts of the indicator initiative?

Who has the biggest role to play in the future sustainability of our city?

What role should SC play in the sustainability of our city?

Explanation of the Action Forum Concept

Prior to an explanation of the Forum Concept participants will be asked an open question:

Where do you think the SC indicator project should go from here?

This will be followed up with an explanation of the Forum concept and a series of questions.

Do you have any suggestions as to the mandate of the Forum?

Do you have any suggestions as to the structure of the Forum?

Should the Forum be integrated into the city of Calgary or remain citizen driven?

Who should be represented on the Forum? Citizens? Stakeholders?

Could you see yourself as a part of the SC Action Forum? As a delegate? As a participant in forum processes?

Are there any final comments you would like make about your participation in the SC Indicators Project, the sustainability of our city or the Sustainable Calgary Action Forum concept?