

The asset management task is two-fold in scope.

One, influence current practitioners to adopt EAP into asset management strategies. Two, train the next generation of land use, GIS, and drainage professionals in the use of EAP. This starts in university.

With completion of the current program to mainstream EAP through case studies, the Partnership has set a process in motion to embed EAP in a university setting to support the work of local government practitioners.

Train new leaders and embed knowledge in-house:

“We believe that incorporating students from Vancouver Island University and other universities will support understanding and experience within municipal governments on the importance of EAP, and simply understanding EAP. Fortunately, most of VIU’s Master of Community Planning, and Master GIS students find themselves working within municipal governments,” states Graham Sakaki.

He is the Regional Research Institute Manager for the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI) at Vancouver Island University.

Beyond the Guidebook Series

Stormwater Planning: A Guidebook for British Columbia, released in 2002, is the foundation document for the Beyond the Guidebook Series of guidance documents. The titles themselves tell a story about the partnership journey in building on the Guidebook through case studies that showcase and celebrate good work, and advance implementation of science-informed approaches.

Context for Rainwater Management and Green Infrastructure in British Columbia (2007)

Implementing a New Culture for Urban Watershed Protection and Restoration in British Columbia (2010)

Moving Towards “Sustainable Watershed Systems, through Asset Management (2015).

Synthesis Report on the Ecological Accounting Process, a B.C. Strategy for Community Investment in Stream Systems (2022)

The EAP Synthesis Report is written for land use practitioners, asset managers, stream stewards, and local government decision-makers.

DOWNLOAD A COPY: https://waterbucket.ca/gi/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/06/EAP-Synthesis-Report-Beyond-the-Guidebook-2022_Jun-2022.pdf

(Editors note: This article was previously published. However we are pleased to profile again this important information.)

Asset Management - Integration for Resilience

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My first introduction to asset management was in 2006 when the Director of Development Services in the City of Port Coquitlam. Our engineering department had prepared a report on the status of asset management, which included a funding gap analysis showing roads were only being maintained to 16 of 20 years of their normal life

cycle. Without fully funded road maintenance, our road surfaces would have to be replaced 4 years earlier.

This was puzzling because like most taxpayers, I assumed my local government was managing its assets to their full life cycle and had put away reserves over time to replace them. Borrowing money for large or special projects was acceptable practice, but why throw money away? Not a good use of taxpayer dollars. I went downstairs late one afternoon to ask our manager of engineering why his maintenance budget wasn’t fully funded. **He advised that was normal and after 10 years of requesting adequate funds for maintenance budgets, he had given up.**

Who kept refusing to adequately fund his maintenance budgets? The Public Works Committee. Who sits on that Committee? Four council members. So this was my introduction to the difference between funding the boring, essential assets that taxpayers assume are being fully funded, and the new, flashy capital projects with their big announcements and ribbon cutting.

Further competition comes from operating budgets with a usual need for more staff due to growing populations. In 2007, I started writing about **the need for asset management to be a fundamental, integrated function in local government.**

In 2008, while a consultant in downtown Vancouver, the president of the Planning Institute of BC phoned me to ask if I would sit on a new committee being formed called Asset Management BC (AMBC). I asked why she would ask me and she advised I was one of the few planners who was knowledgeable about asset management! Appointed to a sub-committee, we developed a model AM policy for local governments. AMBC is likely best known for developing the Framework for Sustainable Service Delivery,

nicknamed The Wheel, given its cyclical or continual process of improvement.

In 2010, AMBC surveyed local governments to determine the status of asset management in BC. With the advent of PSAB 3150 in 2009, local governments now had to account for on their tangible capital assets. The survey results identified the crux of the asset management dilemma:

Long-term planning initiatives such as asset management must compete with short-term priorities. Currently, Councils and Boards are in office for a short time, which can make it challenging for local governments to prioritize long-term initiatives. Furthermore, many of a community's assets are not visible (e.g., water and wastewater pipes). As a result, asset management may not be a top priority in many communities.

Fast forward over a decade to 2022 and what has changed?

Many best practices exist, including the City of Courtenay's AM bylaw (done by the two Davids!), Town of Gibsons leading the way (yea, Mani!) on how to integrate natural assets into asset management and financial planning, and the District of Oak Bay fully managing its 100+ year old infrastructure. These, along with several other leading local governments, however, are still the exceptions. A very Canadian sorry, but this is not good enough.

How does any local government prepare and adopt a financial plan without an asset management plan? Really!!

Without one, you are staggering around in the dark stubbing your toe on insufficient maintenance funds, barking your shin on the replacement cost, and banging your head into climate change. And you've lost the opportunity to extend life cycles and have valuable discussions with Boards, councils and the community about levels of service.

It's not only silly but dangerous.

Risks are increasing with climate change, pandemics, materials & labour force shortages, increasing debts and interest rates, and an impending recession. You can't prepare a financial plan without an asset management plan.

Ask a citizen in a public place if they expect their local government to fully maintain its assets to the end of their useful life and then replace them. They'll look at you, like duh, of course! The public expects this level of service. Our professions should require it. Financial audits should mandate it. The risks are too high, the consequences too

dire and the practice too fundamental to continue with voluntary compliance.

While we could wait until the provincial government has to play its paternal role by changing the legislative requirements on annual financial plans to report on replacement costs and funding gaps but is that necessary? Should professional associations require the integration of asset management planning into financial planning with new sets of mandatory standards of practice? It appears so with no more time to procrastinate.

And the planning profession has to step up to their responsibilities here, too. While often not directly responsible for capital assets or a financial plan, land use planning determines the majority of what type, extent and cost of capital assets are acquired and managed by local governments through land use plans, subdivision regulations and design standards. **More compact design and higher density save local governments \$100 millions in asset management over life cycles** as shown by the Community Life Infrastructure Costing Tool developed by the (the) Ministry of Community, Sport & Cultural Development over 8 years ago (and it's free sourced). This tool provides the very information needed by planners to substantiate planning policy but is rarely used. As any good engineer or finance person will advise you, numbers trump policy! Every development application going on a board or council meeting agenda should have a section analyzing the future impact on the asset management plan with comparative options.

Integrating asset management and financial planning is no longer optional. It should be a professional standard and mandated component of an annual financial report (or the audit is flunked). Local governments manage 60% of the physical assets in Canada on 8 cents of the tax dollar. These assets, like roads, civic buildings, and potable water, storm & sanitary sewer systems (dare we say, bike lanes?!) comprise the economic backbone of our communities – they are essential – and so should their management. While all local governments do asset management and financial planning, the integration needs to enable discussions with our community about level of service, required maintenance and the cost of replacement. As professionals, we owe our communities those discussions. **The resilience of our communities increasingly relies on the integration and the discussions will break the poor practices through awareness.**

(Editors note: Kim is a professional planner who was recently awarded the Innovation and Advocacy individual award from the Planning Institute of BC. She is the author of Docksides Green: The Story of the Most Sustainable Development in the World.)