Sustainability Plan Rewrite 2025

Vision & Guiding Principles

Vision Statement

To cultivate a resilient, equitable, and self-sustaining community grounded in stewardship of the land, social responsibility, and intergenerational learning. We envision Diamond Valley as a place where sustainability is not a concept, but a living practice reflected in our homes, public policies, natural spaces, and local economy.

Core Values

- **Community Empowerment** – Strengthen local voices, especially youth, through meaningful participation and education.

- **Ecological Stewardship** – Protect, restore, and regenerate ecosystems with a focus on watershed health, native species, and low-impact development.

- **Climate Resilience** – Integrate adaptation and mitigation strategies to ensure long-term viability in the face of changing environmental conditions.

- **Circular Economy** – Reduce waste and resource consumption by investing in reuse, repair, and local supply chains.

- **Cultural Integrity** – Respect Indigenous worldviews and traditional ecological knowledge in sustainability practices.

Guiding Principles

1. **Integration** – Sustainability is woven through all municipal decision-making and community initiatives.

2. **Education** – Knowledge-sharing is prioritized across all demographics, especially through schools, workshops, and public engagement.

3. **Transparency & Accountability** – Regular updates, measurement tools, and clear indicators are shared with the public.

4. **Inclusivity** – Diverse stakeholders, including marginalized voices, are invited into the sustainability process.

5. **Innovation & Action** – Embrace evidence-based approaches while supporting grassroots experimentation.

"Sustainability isn't a destination—it's how we get there together."

Section 2: Community Snapshot – Then & Now

Historical Context (2006–2008)

The original Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP) emerged in a time of forward-thinking municipal leadership and strong grassroots involvement. It laid a foundational path with emphasis on environmental responsibility, civic engagement, and youth participation—exemplified by initiatives such as placing high school students as voting members on the Sustainability Committee.

Community Evolution

Since that time, Diamond Valley has seen a number of changes:

- A merging of towns and changes in municipal leadership

- Dissolution of the Sustainability Committee and rollback of related initiatives

- Increased public interest in climate resilience and water conservation

- New opportunities and challenges introduced by technological, demographic, and environmental shifts

Present-Day Snapshot

Today, Diamond Valley stands at a crossroads:

- **Population:** Growing with renewed interest in rural living

- **Natural Assets:** Rich in ecological value but under increasing pressure from climate variability

- **Public Sentiment:** Strong grassroots support for sustainability, especially among youth and environmentally engaged residents

- **Infrastructure & Planning:** Many systems remain from the pre-amalgamation era and require integrated planning updates

"Understanding where we've been helps illuminate where we must go."

Section 3: Key Focus Areas for Sustainable Development

This plan identifies seven interconnected focus areas that form the backbone of a sustainable Diamond Valley. These areas are mutually reinforcing and rooted in community priorities:

3.1 Water Stewardship

- Emphasize conservation, watershed protection, rainwater harvesting, greywater use, and climate-resilient infrastructure

- Advocate for integrated water management in municipal policies and development guidelines

- Recognize First Nations' water governance and Treaty 7 obligations as guiding ethical considerations

3.2 Air Quality & Public Health

- Clean air is fundamental to the health and resilience of Diamond Valley. As wildfire smoke, heat events, and vehicle emissions increase across southern Alberta, protecting both indoor and outdoor air quality has become essential for community well-being.
- Air quality also aligns naturally with our goals in energy, transportation, green buildings, and public health.
- Objectives:
  - Reduce exposure to air pollutants and wildfire smoke through monitoring, design, and education.
  - Integrate air quality considerations into municipal planning and development review.
  - Support high indoor air quality standards in municipal buildings through LEED Silver and ASHRAE 62.1.
  - Strengthen public awareness of the Air Quality Health Index (AQHI).
- Strategic Actions:
  - Partner with CRAZ to host a monitoring station and publish real-time AQHI updates.
  - Implement air-quality-informed planning tools, including walkability and anti-idling strategies.
  - Support indoor air quality improvements in municipal buildings.
  - Educate residents and businesses about AQHI and smoke preparedness.
  - Discourage auto-oriented development such as new drive-throughs in pedestrian-first areas.
- Indicators:
  - AQHI readings and PM2.5 trends.
  - Number of smoke advisory days.
  - Municipal building compliance with ASHRAE 62.1 and LEED IAQ credits.
  - Public engagement metrics.
  - Reduction in idling hotspots.
- Link to Manual:
  A comprehensive Air Quality Technical Addendum is included in the Sustainability Manual and updated annually.

3.3 Built Environment & Green Building

- Support energy-efficient new builds and retrofits guided by LEED and Passive House standards

- Advocate for a municipal resolution to adopt LEED Silver for all new public infrastructure

- Promote mixed-use zoning and walkable neighborhoods to reduce vehicle dependence

3.4 Local Food Systems

- Expand community gardens, edible landscaping, and vertical hydroponics

- Support local producers through farmers' markets and procurement policies

- Encourage food literacy programs in schools and community centers

3.5 Renewable Energy & Efficiency

- Develop incentives and support for rooftop solar, micro-wind, and geothermal systems

- Encourage net-zero building targets and community-scale energy cooperatives

- Advocate for provincial support of community-generated power

3.6 Waste Reduction & Circular Economy

- Build local capacity for repair, reuse, upcycling, and material recovery (e.g., plastics into 3D filament)

- Promote zero-waste events and community collection days

- Explore municipal composting programs and waste audits

3.7 Sustainable Transportation

- Enhance pedestrian and cycling infrastructure

- Encourage the use of EVs through charging networks and shared-use vehicles

- Collaborate regionally on rural transit options

3.8 Health, Culture & Livability

- Expand access to parks, trails, and nature-based wellness programs

- Support cultural programming that reflects Indigenous, settler, and newcomer histories

- Advance equity in access to housing, food, and public services

   "Sustainability must work for everyone—now and into the future."

Section 4: Strategic Actions & Indicators

To transition from vision to implementation, this plan identifies strategic actions, potential partnerships, and key indicators for each focus area.

4.1 Water Stewardship

Strategic Actions:

- Develop and implement a municipal rainwater harvesting incentive program

- Expand xeriscaping and native planting initiatives across public spaces

- Align with regional watershed plans and implement water budgeting tools

Indicators:

- Gallons of water saved through rainwater systems annually

- % of municipal green spaces converted to xeriscape/native planting

- Number of greywater permits issued

4.2 Built Environment & Green Building

Strategic Actions:

- Introduce policy requiring LEED Silver certification for new municipal facilities

- Create a Green Building Rebate Program for residential retrofits

- Develop design guidelines for low-impact, climate-resilient construction

Indicators:

- % of public buildings certified under LEED or equivalent

- Number of green retrofit applications per year

- Energy use intensity (EUI) of new construction

4.3 Local Food Systems

Strategic Actions:

- Launch a Community Food Security Assessment

- Partner with schools to integrate gardens into the curriculum

- Support formation of a local food council or cooperative

Indicators:

- Number of community gardens per capita

- Volume of local food sold at markets annually

- Participation rates in school food programs

4.4 Renewable Energy & Efficiency

Strategic Actions:

- Implement property-assessed clean energy (PACE) financing options

- Facilitate solar cooperatives and collective purchasing programs

- Host energy efficiency audits and training workshops

Indicators:

- Installed kW of renewable energy capacity annually

- % of energy from renewable sources in the community

- Number of households completing energy retrofits

4.5 Waste Reduction & Circular Economy

Strategic Actions:

- Expand the Repair Café model and host quarterly circular economy fairs

- Create a local materials bank for reuse and construction offcuts

- Implement community-wide composting trials

Indicators:

- Diversion rate from landfill

- of repair café attendees and items fixed

- Tonnage of compostable waste processed

4.6 Sustainable Transportation

Strategic Actions:

- Develop a Community Mobility Plan

- Create a cycling and pedestrian master network map

- Launch an electric bike/library or rural ride-share pilot

Indicators:

- Kilometers of active transport routes added

- % of households within 400m of a trail or path

- Transit/rideshare participation rates

4.7 Health, Culture & Livability

Strategic Actions:

- Integrate Indigenous place-naming and interpretation signage in public areas

- Design a NatureRx program for physical and mental wellness

- Include accessibility audits in all public planning reviews

Indicators:

- of new inclusive cultural or wellness programs annually
- % of municipal spaces with Indigenous recognition elements
- Community well-being index (survey-based)

Section 5: Governance & Implementation Framework

"A plan without a path is only a wish."

5.1 Municipal Leadership & Integration

- Embed sustainability into all municipal decision-making through a **Sustainability Lens Tool**—a checklist or rubric that council and staff use to evaluate projects, policies, and budgets.

- Appoint a **Sustainability Coordinator or Committee** to track progress, oversee indicators, and report to Council and the community.

- Require sustainability and climate considerations in **all municipal RFPs, development reviews, and capital planning** processes.

5.2 Youth, Education & Civic Participation

- Re-establish the **Youth Sustainability Council**, including student reps with voting status on advisory committees.

- Partner with local schools to develop **curriculum-linked projects** using the Sustainability Plan as a teaching resource.

- Create a **Civic Mentorship Program**, pairing high school students with municipal staff and community leaders to gain real-world experience.

5.3 Funding, Partnerships & Capacity Building

- Identify and pursue funding through:

    - **Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Green Municipal Fund**

    - **Municipal Climate Change Action Centre (MCCAC)**

    - **Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC) pilot programs**

    - **CMHC Seed & Solution Grants** for housing-related initiatives

- Establish **community implementation teams** (e.g., Food Action Team, Circular Economy Team) to move specific sections forward

- Develop an **annual Sustainability Report Card** for public transparency and accountability

5.4 Phasing & Timelines

- Phase 1 (Years 1–2): Governance re-establishment, community education, and low-cost/high-impact pilot projects

- Phase 2 (Years 3–5): Infrastructure upgrades, policy reforms, and regional collaborations

- Phase 3 (Year 5+): Evaluation and plan renewal with community input

Section 6: Policy Foundations & Implementation Mechanisms

A sustainability plan becomes actionable when anchored in clear, enforceable, and resourced municipal policy. Two locally rooted mechanisms—previously in place—offer an opportunity for reinstatement and innovation.

6.1 Reinstate a Green Reserve Fund

From 2008 to the amalgamation of Diamond Valley, the Town of Black Diamond operated a **Green Reserve Fund** (Policy 12-60) that redirected operational savings from green initiatives into a dedicated pool for future projects. Projects that reduced energy use, water consumption, GHG emissions, or waste contributed savings to the fund, which could then be accessed for new or upgraded sustainability initiatives.

Recommendation:

- Reinstate the Green Reserve Fund at the Diamond Valley level with updated reporting and impact metrics

- Empower all departments to participate in both contributing and applying for reinvestment

- Prioritize youth-led or school-partnered projects as eligible under the fund

  "Good policy ensures that sustainability pays forward."

6.2 Adopt a Resolution Supporting LEED Silver for Municipal Builds

The **Red Book (14th Edition)** specifies that all Alberta Infrastructure projects must be constructed to at least **LEED Silver or equivalent** standards. This provincial precedent affirms that sustainable construction is both achievable and expected for public buildings.

Recommendation:

- Diamond Valley should formally adopt a resolution to design and construct all new municipal facilities to **LEED Silver** or equivalent standard

- Apply this resolution in alignment with long-range capital planning and asset management

- Consider LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) when updating area structure plans or major redevelopments

Benefits:

- Lower long-term life-cycle costs

- Healthier indoor environments

- Enhanced funding eligibility (federal/provincial grants)

  "Building to LEED Silver today avoids building regret tomorrow."

Section 7: Education, Engagement & Intergenerational Learning

A sustainable community must invest in learning — not just formal education, but lifelong knowledge-sharing that empowers people to shape their environment. This section outlines strategies to activate schools, public spaces, and digital platforms for transformative education and engagement.

7.1 Empower Youth as Sustainability Leaders

Your original Sustainability Committee set a remarkable precedent by placing high school students as full voting members. This civic model gave young people real ownership over their future.

Recommendations:

- Reinstate the model of student voting members on future sustainability committees

- Create a **Sustainability Youth Council** in partnership with the high school and town

- Offer mentorship and micro-grants for student-led sustainability projects

7.2 Establish a Community Learning Series

Public workshops, field demonstrations, and lunch & learns can equip residents with practical skills and shared understanding.

Themes to consider:

- Water harvesting and xeriscaping

- Circular economy practices (e.g., repair cafés, 3D printing with recycled plastic)

- Food literacy and vertical growing systems

- Navigating municipal and provincial climate policy

Delivery Formats:

- In-person events at schools, libraries, or community centres

- Field days at local demonstration projects

- Online mini-courses or blog-linked resource hubs

7.3 Foster School-Municipality Partnerships

Schools can be powerful sustainability incubators.

Examples:

- Use vertical seacan greenhouse projects for curriculum-based food studies

- Co-develop schoolyard habitat gardens with Cows and Fish guidance

- Enable student data collection for water or energy monitoring

- Include youth in the design of public signage, infographics, and art

  "When you teach a community, you don't just change minds—you shift futures."

7.4 Engage the Broader Community

To build sustained momentum, residents need accessible, inclusive, and meaningful ways to participate.

Tools:

- "Sustainability Tracker" dashboard with community progress indicators

- StoryMap or visual timeline of Diamond Valley's sustainability journey

- Online engagement hub to gather input, share successes, and host challenges

Ongoing Initiatives:

- Annual Sustainability Fair (perhaps tied to Earth Day or Rivers Day)

- Neighbourhood sustainability challenges with small incentives

- Public art, murals, and storytelling around climate, water, and renewal

Section 8: Monitoring, Evaluation & Adaptive Management

To maintain credibility, guide decision-making, and continuously improve outcomes, this plan includes a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework. The intent is to ensure transparency, accountability, and community alignment over time.

8.1 Goals of Monitoring & Evaluation

- Track progress toward sustainability goals using defined indicators

- Provide data to support evidence-based decision-making

- Identify challenges and opportunities for improvement

- Foster trust and transparency with the public

- Support reporting requirements for grants and partnerships

8.2 Key Components

a. Indicators & Baselines

- Leverage the indicators in Section 4 as performance metrics

- Establish 2024–2025 as baseline years for comparison

- Include social, environmental, and economic indicators

b. Reporting Cycle

- **Annual Progress Reports** delivered to Council and made public online

- **Mid-Term Review** every 3 years to re-evaluate targets, partnerships, and funding needs

- **Community Dashboard** (interactive web-based) updated quarterly or biannually

c. Evaluation Tools

- GIS mapping for environmental and infrastructure tracking

- Community surveys to assess qualitative outcomes and lived experiences

- Data from municipal departments, provincial/federal agencies, and NGOs

8.3 Adaptive Management

Sustainability is not static. External pressures—climate impacts, demographic shifts, policy changes—require flexibility.

Approach:

- Apply a "plan-do-check-act" model for continuous improvement

- Enable the Sustainability Committee to recommend course corrections annually

- Hold community learning sessions to interpret findings and co-create adjustments

- Revise indicators or actions when new science or technology emerges

8.4 Accountability Structures

- Appoint a municipal lead (or team) responsible for collecting and coordinating data

- Sustain the **Sustainability Committee** as a citizen oversight body

- Allow public access to data sources and analysis through open data platforms

   "We measure what matters — and what we measure, we improve."

Section 9: Appendices

The following appendices serve as supporting documentation and practical tools for implementing, evaluating, and communicating the sustainability plan:

Appendix A: Visuals, Charts & Infographics

- Figure A1: Sheep River Watershed Overview

- Figure A2: Historical Land Use Change (Satellite Imagery)

- Figure A3: Glacial Melt Comparison Over Time

- Figure A4: Projected Climate Trends for Southern Alberta

- Figure A5: Renewable Energy Potential Map

- Figure A6: Community Engagement Timeline

- Figure A7: Local Biodiversity and Native Species Map

- Figure A8: Annual Household Waste Composition by Type

- Figure A9: Monthly Precipitation & Snowpack Levels

- Figure A10: Projected Population Growth vs. Water Demand

- Figure A11: Per Capita Residential Water Use Over Time

Appendix B: Reference Materials & Source Documents

- 2008 Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (Original)

- Calgary Energy Map Study

- Sustainable Communities Toolkit – CaGBC

- Ecological Footprint Standards (2009)

- LEED ND 2009 with Canadian ACP

- Consumption Overview Report

- Red Book: Technical Design Requirements for Alberta Infrastructure

- Municipal Sustainability Plan (Post-Amalgamation)

- ASHRAE High-Performance Design Principles

- Native Plant Species Source List (ANPC 2010)

Appendix C: Policy & Program Templates

- Sample Resolution to Adopt LEED Silver Standard for Municipal Construction

- Green Reserve Fund Structure and History

- Public Engagement Workshop Format Template

- School Sustainability Curriculum Modules

- Grant Application Tracker Template

- Rainwater Harvesting Program Starter Guide

Section 10: Implementation Roadmap

Turning a vision into reality requires a clear and actionable path. This section outlines how the Sustainability Plan will be implemented in phases, with defined roles, timelines, and resource pathways.

10.1 Phased Rollout

Phase 1 (2025–2026): Foundation Building

- Re-establish the **Sustainability Committee** with youth and citizen representatives

- Create baseline metrics using Section 4 indicators

- Launch public outreach campaign to introduce the plan

- Apply for foundational grants (e.g., FCM Green Municipal Fund, Alberta EcoTrust)

Phase 2 (2026–2028): Program Initiation

- Pilot the **Lawn Buy-Back Program**, **Repair Café Expansion**, and **Rainwater Harvesting Rebate**

- Implement sustainability audits in municipal buildings

- Adopt a Council resolution on LEED Silver for future infrastructure

- Partner with schools to integrate sustainability curriculum modules

Phase 3 (2028–2030): Infrastructure & Innovation

- Develop a local **Sustainable Living Centre** (maker space, education hub)

- Expand solar/hydroponic food production and local materials reprocessing

- Formalize town-wide **Circular Economy Strategy**

- Launch a Community Sustainability Dashboard (online platform)

10.2 Roles & Responsibilities

Stakeholder	Key Responsibilities
Town Council	Adopt resolutions, allocate budget, oversee municipal integration
Sustainability Committee	Guide community engagement, monitor progress, recommend policies
Municipal Staff	Integrate sustainability into planning, procurement, operations
Schools & Educators	Deliver civic and environmental education
Residents & Youth	Participate, co-create, volunteer, provide feedback
Local Businesses	Support circular economy efforts and adopt sustainable practices
External Partners	Provide funding, research, technical expertise (NGOs, government, academia)

10.3 Funding & Resource Strategy

- Leverage existing savings (e.g., **Green Reserve Fund** concept)

- Apply for provincial/federal sustainability grants

- Establish partnerships with foundations, universities, Indigenous communities

- Develop local fundraising mechanisms (e.g., eco-events, community bonds)

10.4 Risk & Mitigation Considerations

Risk	Mitigation
Loss of political will	Maintain public engagement and committee continuity
Budget constraints	Stage implementation and diversify funding sources
Lack of data	Build partnerships with academic and regional data providers
Community fatigue	Keep programs visible, relevant, and community-led

10.5 Success Factors

- Consistent public communication

- Leadership from youth and engaged citizens

- Transparent reporting and recognition of successes

- Adaptability in the face of change

"Planning without implementation is dreaming; implementation without planning is chaos."