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## soundbytes

**Sustainable tourism meets the present needs of tourists and host communities while protecting and enhancing these areas for future generations.**

**Many PLUS Network** cities are important gateways and tourist destinations. This newsletter explores some emerging trends and lessons around sustainable tourism that help tie it into a city's long-term planning process. Three kinds of tourism that hold promise for Network cities are explored: Conservation, Heritage and Event Tourism.

### Conservation Tourism

Conservation tourism focuses on raising awareness about ecosystems and the environment through tourism. It promotes low-impact travel, brings travelers to protected areas and educates visitors about local ecosystems. Conservation tourism generates income for local communities and often provides funds to conserve and protect areas and systems. Conservation tourism can also extend to respecting cultures and livelihoods, and many indigenous communities focus their tourist activities in this area. Conservation tourism activities typically include promoting public space, establishing gardens with local herbs and medicinal plants at hotels and partnering with restaurants that source local organic foods.

### Conservation Tourism in San José

Costa Rica is renowned for ecotourism, with over a million visitors annually going to see birds, mammals and reptiles that live in the forest canopies, near the beaches and around volcanoes. In order to ensure that these natural riches exist for future visitors, the government, along with the Costa Rican Tourism Boards, educational groups and other stakeholders, developed a holistic approach towards sustainable tourism. One innovation was the development of a Certificate for Sustainable Tourism (CST). The CST measures and certifies tourism companies on their impact on natural, cultural and social resources. The certification focuses on four operational components: biophysical issues, infrastructure and services, clients, and the socio-economic environment. The goal is for tourism companies to practice good environmental and cultural stewardship, improve the quality of life of the local communities, and generate economic prosperity. The CST addresses both wilderness and urban tourism activities. Currently, there is no international certification or standards for sustainable tourism, so local leadership helps develop benchmarks and incentives for local businesses to adopt this outlook.

Sustainable tourism is ecologically, socially and culturally sensitive. It aims to manage environmental impacts while generating income, employment, and conserving the integrity of local cultures. It serves residents and visitors alike.

Clean Travel is an innovative program that engages international tourists arriving in Costa Rica. Clean Travel allows tourists to offset greenhouse gas emissions from their flight by contributing to Costa Rica's National Forestry Financing Fund, which maintains national forests and parks. Clean Travel charges \$5.00 towards each ton of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted, providing an affordable option for tourists to contribute towards the conservation of the destinations they are enjoying. The city of San José has expanded this idea with an initiative called "San Jose, Clean and Green". This program includes awareness and education campaigns, increasing the number of waste and recycling services throughout the city, and is promoting urban greening activities for residents and tourists alike.



## Event Tourism

Cities often host large events that attract international tourists. Events require vision, committed planning and large up-front investments. The motivation for hosting events is primarily aimed at improving the awareness and image of a city and to have a long-term positive sustainable impact for residents. Managing the short-term effects of an event on the local residents and their quality of life, while catering to the visitors during their short stay, is essential. An event tourism strategy can stimulate positive socio-cultural effects and local economic development while at the same time must aim to reduce any negative impacts on communities and the environment.

Some questions to guide the development of a strategy include:

- Who are the stakeholders that must be engaged throughout the planning, implementation and post-event stages and how can they be engaged?
- How will it be possible to channel the potential economic and social benefits of an event to a broad range of beneficiaries?
- What are global best practices in event planning and how can the city develop indicators that will ensure it meets the benchmarks?
- How can a city measure an event's success and the experience of tourists?

Guiding principles for greening sporting events were pioneered by [David Chernushenko](#) in the 1990's, with the publication of "Running Sports Events and Facilities that Won't Cost the Earth". His most recent book, "Sustainable Sport Management" was published in 2001. His principles are founded in the idea of promoting community health, the well-being of athletes and recreationalists, preserving ecosystems and managing the economics of an event.

## Event Tourism - 2010 Olympics in Vancouver and Whistler

Vancouver and Whistler have hosted many international events, however the upcoming 2010 Olympic Games are the first to be used to promote innovation around sustainability through event tourism principles. Whistler has developed a resort-wide Event Tourism Strategy that is aligned with the long-term Whistler2020 vision. The integration of these strategies builds stability for residents and visitors.

VANOC, the Vancouver Olympic Organizing Committee, recently released its third Sustainability Report, outlining its progress in meeting the sustainability policies and targets in preparation for the Games. Their scorecard includes Key Performance Indicators in the areas of Accountability, Environmental Stewardship and Impact Reduction, Social Inclusion and Responsibility, Aboriginal Participation and Collaboration, Economic Benefits, and Sport for Sustainable Living. The report is transparent in that it outlines the challenges that have been faced and the innovative solutions and partnerships being developed to meet the needs of the communities, athletes and tourists. Open lines of communication with all stakeholders and looking long-term at the legacy of the Games are principles that are being upheld.

### Whistlers' Guiding Principles for Sustainable Events

- Develop a commitment statement about the sustainability objectives of your event and communicate widely
- Support local products or service providers
- Go paper-free by use electronic technology.
- Meet locally and travel lightly to reduce travel distances. Facilitate sustainable transportation options.
- Respect and recognize Aboriginal territory.
- Eat vegetarian meals and use regional and organic food products.
- Choose accommodation that implement linen reuse programs and other sustainable initiatives.
- Choose energy-conscious venues and ensure that lights and heating/cooling systems are well managed
- Consider the social and environmental impacts and opportunities when procuring supplies, gifts and services

### Whistler2020's vision aims to:

- Reduce community-wide GHG emissions and solid waste
- Design new and sustainable venues and neighborhoods;
- Create policies on affordable housing
- Encourage public transit use
- Engage citizens annually in community sustainability planning.

One important contribution towards sustainability has been the use of wood and wood waste in the construction of LEED Standard facilities for the Olympics. As a result of climate change, British Columbia has been plagued by an epidemic of mountain pine beetles, which have destroyed huge parts of the forests, and severely impacted the forestry industry and communities reliant on the economic gains generated through this natural resource. Rather than waste this precious resource, it was decided to use salvaged wood for the ceiling of the Oval, a 512,000 square foot multi-use facility with capacity for 8,000 spectators, that will host the Olympic speed skating events. After the Olympics, the facility will be retrofitted to meet the needs of the local community for ice, court and track sports.



## Heritage Tourism

Heritage tourism is a branch of tourism oriented towards the promotion of culture, both new and old. Heritage tourism is concerned with identification, management and protection of local values through gaining an appreciation of the past. Culture, heritage and the arts enhance the appeal of a destination while reinforcing an identity and sense of place. Every year millions of tourists visit historic sites and cities, museums and theatres. In light of today's fast pace of development and opportunities for interconnectedness via the Internet, heritage tourism is increasingly important for bringing people together to reflect on the past and for building networks in a location. Preserving a city's cultural heritage can facilitate understanding among people, while having a positive economic impact.

## Heritage Tourism in Saint John, Canada

Since its foundation in 1783, Saint John has been one of Canada's gateways, welcoming immigrants from around the world. The city has a unique character with preserved neighbourhoods that define the spirit and culture of the city. These historic buildings provide a framework for building on the past as the city undergoes its long-term planning process. The city is working with developers and planners to build understanding around the importance of the historic identity of the city which contributes to the local lifestyle and a visitor's experience.

In order to support heritage tourism, the city developed a Preservation Program that educates property owners about how to preserve the architectural and historic characteristics of their buildings. Being sensitive to the integrity of a building's design, age and character is the essence of preservation planning. The guidelines advise owners to keep buildings intact and preserved and when necessary, repair buildings using materials that match the "historic integrity". It is recognized that the value of preserved property will be enhanced.

Saint John is conducting research on older buildings throughout the City to be included in the Canadian Register of Historic Places, which provides online listings of formally recognized historic places across the country. As part of this, a Heritage Awareness Program started in December 2008, which includes a newspaper column that promotes heritage places, dispels heritage myths, and provides helpful tips for owners doing work on their buildings. The program includes community sessions, BBQs, and walking tours of neighbourhoods to educate the public about unique features of the area.



## ICSC's Day of Action: Waterfront Clean-up in Dar es Salaam

Patrick Santoro, an urban planner who is working with Sustainable Cities and the City Council in Dar es Salaam, reported that on January 17, 2009 approximately 400 community members met at the waterfront in Dar es Salaam to clean the garbage off the beach. This event brought together a wide range of stakeholders from throughout the City, all of whom recognized the importance of beautifying and revitalizing Dar es Salaam's waterfront area. Support was offered from public and private partners, and this event educated the public around issues of coastal management and the importance of restoring the waterfront. A local women's group that provides a food vending service in the area subsequently organized two more clean-up events and local authorities are now discussing how to maintain the effort in a more organized and formal process.



## Urban Tourism Peer Exchange

Sustainable Cities: PLUS Network and Dar es Salaam City Council hosted a four-day Peer Exchange in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania February 9-12, 2009, on Sustainable Tourism, with an emphasis on the importance of multi-stakeholder processes to issues of coastal management and climate change adaptation. The Peer Exchange brought together delegates from Dar es Salaam, Durban (South Africa), and Dakar (Senegal), as well as tourism professionals from British Columbia and the Yukon in Canada.

This event illustrated the similar challenges that the three African cities face in regards to tourism, such as the delicate balance of promoting tourism in a manner that provides increased economic benefits to local communities without degrading the fragile coastlines that attract tourists. The key objective of the Exchange was to increase awareness on the importance of multi-stakeholder processes for sustainable tourism development and management, and this was achieved through in-depth discussions and exploration of tools and approaches being applied in cities around the world.

The Peer Exchange included discussions about the roles and functions of the stakeholders in driving and facilitating tourism and opportunities to

leverage the networks of stakeholders for productive and sustainable outcomes. Participants highlighted the need for identifying the barriers that restrict growth of the tourism sector in their respective communities and the subsequent opportunity to designate roles to different community stakeholders to contribute towards developing their local tourism. The importance of striking a balance between use of the coastline to attract tourists and protecting fragile coastal ecosystems was stressed.

Discussion Highlights included:

- Identification of the barriers that restrict growth of tourism in the communities.
- The various roles of different community stakeholders in developing their local tourism sectors.
- What is meant by "Sustainable Tourism" and the role of local communities in the management of natural resources and spaces.
- The impact of climate change on coastal communities and the need to incorporate prevention and adaptation strategies into long term planning efforts.

Participants reached a mutual understanding of the need to establish and maintain effective lines of communication between all stakeholders (i.e. local and central governments, the private sector, NGOs) if the reality of a sustainable

Most tourist-focused destinations have a "destination marketing or management organization" (DMO) to support and promote tourism. DMO's consider management strategies that lead to balanced and sustainable destination growth and must consider long-term policy issues, such as environmental stewardship as well as "on the ground" details of a visitor's experience, such as maps, information on services and festivals.

tourism industry is to be realized. Furthermore, effective engagement of all stakeholders creates ownership, accountability and sustainability.

Another innovation affecting tourism is that with the growth of accessible mapping services and new media technologies, such as Google Maps, there are opportunities for tourists and tourism professionals to find out how people relate to their city, the past and the present. One example is the website [www.mapmylondon.com](http://www.mapmylondon.com) where users upload text, photographs, audio and video material to build a collective memory of a place.

## NEWS FROM THE NETWORK

### Cochrane, Canada

The PLUS Network's newest member, the Town of Cochrane, is located in the picturesque Bow River Valley, Canada, and has experienced substantial growth in recent years, so the new Mayor and Council, elected in 2007, thought it would be a good time to reconnect with the evolving community. Using the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Green Municipal Funds, the Cochrane Sustainability Plan (CSP) was launched in June 2008, with the approach of: **Think long term. Look at the whole. See the connections.** While the Town provided support resources, the CSP has been created, led and owned by the community.

The first step involved establishing a 12-member Citizen's Advisory Group (CAG) that led the overall process. The CAG's approved the project Engagement Plan, approved the sustainability principles, created the long term vision, and developed the implementation framework.

Close to 500 residents answered the following visioning questions:

- What do you value about Cochrane?
- What changes would you most like to see?
- What are your hopes and dreams for Cochrane in the next 50 years?
- How can you help make this happen?



Next, 72 volunteers formed Action Groups in six key areas – social, culture, economic, natural environment, built environment, and governance. Each Group worked separately on key tasks before integrating their work, which resulted in the development of the “Pathways for the Future”. Each Pathway represents a focus area for a sustainable Cochrane and outlines a statement of success, a statement of current reality, and targets.

In February 2009, the Town of Cochrane hosted a Bootcamp for Sustainability, organized and facilitated by Intelligent Futures and Sustainable Cities. Participants received an introduction to long-term planning and then applied their knowledge to Cochrane’s CSP as the case study. Specific recommendations were given to the Town and the CAG on next steps for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of the CSP. The CSP document will be released May 19<sup>th</sup> at a Document Completion Celebration. The next phase of the project is to grow the capacity of the community to help implement the plan.



#### Lessons learned:

- Stick to a clear timeline. This respects volunteers and their time, and keeps the momentum.
- Ensure there is a group of staff or citizens to do pre-planning for the process. Cochrane had an interdepartmental staff team that developed an approach and methodology prior to launching the project to the community. The pre-planning provided a clear starting point, and an end point (which made it less overwhelming for the community)
- Have fun. This is a process meant to bring a community together and to build trust between diverse groups of people.
- Build flexibility into the process. If one approach is not working, the project team should try something different.

For more information please see <http://cochraneSustainability.ca/>.

For information on Bootcamps, please contact Sustainable Cities Senior Project Officer, Samantha Anderson at [sjanderson@icsc.ca](mailto:sjanderson@icsc.ca).

## Colima – Mexico

Colima, Mexico, hosted its First Urban Forum in February, focusing on the use of space, mobility and transportation. Broad public participation was encouraged with over 180 attendees from the federal and state and municipal level governments, the Federation of Transportation and students. Colima drew on the experience of PLUS Network members from

Curitiba, San Jose and Chihuahua, who outlined trends of mobility planning and promoted their ideas for urban sustainability.

Colima worked in coordination with the Federation of Transportation of the State of Colima to bring together transportation administrators from other states and cities. The PLUS Network representatives at the Forum spoke to these decision makers and shared experiences on how to start a Strategic Agenda of Mobility and Transportation.



## Welcome New PLUS Network Members!

### CANADA

**Port Alberni, BC** population 17,550

**National Capital Commission, Ottawa, ON** (Crown Corporation)

**Gatineau, Québec** population 242,125

**Cochrane, Alberta** population 12,040

### USA

**Chattanooga, Tennessee** population 154,770

For further information on the Sustainable Cities : PLUS Network please visit [www.sustainablecities.net](http://www.sustainablecities.net)

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#### Resources:

1. **Commonwealth Resource Historic Management:** [www.chrml.com](http://www.chrml.com)
2. **New Scientist / Opinion:** <http://www.newscientist.com/article/mg20126965.900-comment-heritage-is-not-what-it-used-to-be.html?DCMP=OTC-rss&nsref=online-news>
3. <http://www.parquedellago.com/sustainability.html>
4. **The Sustainable Tourism Gateway:** <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/st-what-is.html>
5. **Responsible Tourism.** Produced by Tourism Whistler, Research and Intelligence, Aug 2007.
6. **David Chernushenko website:** <http://www.davidc.ca/Home.html>
7. **Vancouver 2010 website:** <http://www.vancouver2010.com/en/sustainability-and-aboriginal-parti/sustainability-report/-/31734/31656/5jelel/sustainability-report.html>
8. **Vancouver 2010 website:** <http://www.vancouver2010.com/en/sustainability-and-aboriginal-parti/sustainability-report/-/31734/31656/5jelel/sustainability-report.html>
9. **Vancouver 2010 website:** <http://www.vancouver2010.com/en/sustainability-and-aboriginal-parti/sustainability-report/-/31734/31656/5jelel/sustainability-report.html>