

Transition Town Guildford

From oil dependency to local resilience in Western Australia

Web: www.transitiontownguildford.com/about

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21 July 2012

Mayor Charlie Zannino
City of Swan Administration Centre
PO Box 196
MIDLAND WA 6936

Response to the City of Swan Strategic Community Plan 2012-2022

Dear Sir

Transition Town Guildford participated in the public development of the City's Strategic Community Plan (SCP). We are pleased to see the outcome of the process and welcome the opportunity to provide further input at this stage.

We were encouraged to see reference to climate change in the SCP. However, the plan seems to lack any clear sense of the urgency or scale of changes required to address climate change. It is widely regarded that the next decade is the critical period for action to give us any hope of avoiding the worst consequences of climate change.

"This is the critical decade for action. The choices we make between now and 2020 will shape our future. To minimise climate change risks we must begin to decarbonise our economy and move to cleaner energy sources this decade. The longer we wait the more difficult and costly it will be. Western Australia has abundant potential for expanding renewable energy generation, with some of the best wind and solar resources in Australia." *The Critical Decade: Climate Change Impacts for Western Australia*, by the Climate Commission

Yet there is no reference in the SCP to renewable energy, peak oil or decreasing dependence on fossil fuels. While there is an objective to reduce carbon, waste and greenhouse gases (N1.1), there is no concrete target (for example, striving for the City of Swan to become carbon neutral or zero waste). Specific, measurable and ambitious targets are essential in transitioning to a low carbon local economy in the near future.

The term 'sustainable' is used extensively throughout the document, yet it is not defined. For example, what does the City of Swan consider 'sustainable growth' to mean? We consider a clear definition of such key terms to be vital to effective implementation of the SCP.

Transition Town Guildford is a community group aligned with the world-wide Transition Town Movement: people working on issues of transport, food, energy, waste and recycling, housing, education, flora and fauna. Transition Towns is a grassroots movement that began in the UK in 2005. Now more than 2,500 groups around the world are active in making their communities more sustainable, social and resilient in the face of climate change and peak oil.

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There is no mention of community groups or community engagement in the objectives. The City of Swan needs to build into its Community Plan actions to engage with, support and encourage community groups. We therefore request the inclusion of an additional objective under Governance, as follows:

Objective

G1.3 - Promote community engagement

Strategies

G1.3.1 - Promote active liaison with new and existing community groups

G1.3.2 – Encourage public participation in decision making

We also wish to make the following comments and suggestions regarding descriptions of the following strategies currently included in the Plan. Our specific suggestions are highlighted in bold italics below:

Economics

There is no connection or acknowledgement of the relationship between business and industry aspirations outlined under Economics, and the environmental ideals listed in Natural Environment. These aspects of the SCP are addressed separately but are in fact intimately intertwined. We believe it is important that this is reflected in the Plan as the economy depends entirely on the health and resources of the natural environment.

E1.1.4 Target and attract identified industries to capitalise on the power economy and ***renewable energy sources*** of Western Australia

Natural Environment

N1.1.1 Effectively manage resource consumption, including water, energy ***and non-renewable resources***

N1.1.3 This strategy currently states, 'Preserve and protect air quality' but there is no mention of soil quality or fertility. This is surprising, given the highly valuable Swan Valley with its rich soils is located within the City.

N1.2.1 Minimise the impact of extreme weather conditions through emergency management planning, ***community education and preparation***

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N2.1.1 Conserve open spaces, natural vegetation and bushland ***with support from local community groups***

We suggest the following two additional strategies to conserve native biodiversity:

N.2.1.2 Conserve and enhance existing native flora and fauna.

N 2.1.3 Implement 'best practice' in management of processes threatening to native flora and fauna including invasive species, fire and loss of habitat

N2.2.1 Protect waterways through appropriate land management practices, ***particularly prevention of further river bank erosion***

Build Environment – Sustainable transport solutions

B3 We strongly endorse the third built environment outcome to provide sustainable transport solutions

We look forward to seeing the final draft of the SCP encompassing community input. We also look forward to supporting the City to implement this Plan over the coming years.

Sincerely yours,

Transition Town Guildford Steering Committee

Dr Peter Langlands

Dr Barb Frey

Dr Chris Hogan

Simon Kilbane

Rod Mitchell

Tammy Hanson

Tanami Magnus

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