

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Kingston has a vision to become Canada's Most Sustainable City (City of Kingston, 2018). The potential of achieving visionary objectives through sustainability planning depends on the planning policies and mandates outlined to the community (Grant et al., 2018). Studies suggest that planning objectives can influence local policies and therefore the quality of the plan is of great importance to implement the sustainable practices.

Sustainable development has become a significant concept in planning frameworks and therefore it is of importance to analyze whether over time official plans have adopted sustainable principles into planning policies, objectives, and visions. Content analysis is an established qualitative technique used to code and interpret secondary data that is presented in a non-numeric formation (Silvermann & Peterson, 2014). Content analysis and scoring is a process that is widely used in planning studies, as it helps to facilitate cross-study comparisons that allow for a more comprehensive understanding on plan quality principles (Guyadeen, 2017).

The purpose of this study was to investigate how both the planning process and the quality of a local plan can impact the growth of a community through the perspective of sustainable development. Evaluating the sustainability of the objectives, goals, and visions of a plan allows for an assessment of the evolution of the policies over time and how well the values of the community are integrated and implemented into planning frameworks. A three-step content analysis developed by Berke and Conroy (2000) has been adopted to evaluate the use of sustainability principles in official plans.

In consideration of the definition of sustainable development, Berke and Conroy (2000) established six sustainable principles that are outlined in the following table. Adapted from Berke and Conroy (2000) and Conroy and Jun (2014), the six categories of techniques and indicators included in the evaluation framework and the specific techniques that they contain.

Consistent with Berke and Conroy (2000), eight plan elements have been identified. The plan elements are as followed:

- Housing
- Transportation
- Environment
- Energy
- Land Use

Public Facilities
 Historic and Cultural Resources
 Economic Development

Additionally, a development management technique that was stipulated by policies in the official plan for promoting a given principle were identified. Any sustainability indicators were then evaluated against the plan components to identify areas of weaknesses or strength in respect to sustainable development principles.

When a policy contained words such as, *encouraged, considered, intended, or should* the policy was regarded as suggested and subsequently scored a 1 (score = 1). Conversely, policies with the words *shall, will, require, or must* were considered as required in the official plan and scored a 2 (score =2) (Conroy & Jun, 2014). Additionally, policy implementation and monitoring was a significant aspect of this research, therefore if the policy indicated implementation and monitoring were suggested, it was scored a 1 (score = 1) compared to if it was required it was scored a 2 (score = 2).

The evaluation determined which plan elements and sustainable principles improved over time between the two plans. An analysis on the official plans explored the evolution of the inclusion of sustainability principles in the City of Kingston’s official plan.

Plan Component	Harmony with Nature	Livable Built Environment	Place-based Economy	Equity	Polluters Pay Principle	Responsible Regionalism	Implementation and Monitoring	Total
2006 City of Kingston Official Plan	10	8	8	2	6	6	9	61
2018 City of Kingston Official Plan	11	9	11	9	7	9	11	67

When evaluating the extent that the City of Kingston has incorporated sustainability principles into their official plan over time, it can be observed there has been an increase in the inclusion of these principles. The official plans have promoted multiple sustainable principles through the integrate of policies from all plan elements to create comprehensive policies and objectives in the community’s official plan. The 2018 official plan most effectively utilizes sustainable development as a concept in an integrative framework for directing the development of the City of Kingston.

The following recommendations emerged from this research:

- Improvement in the Official Plan
- Increase Collaboration with Organizations and the Public
- Sustainable Development Criterial Evaluation Tool
- Separation of Implementation and Monitoring Principle
- Planner Evaluation Tool Training
- Weighting of Sustainable Principles

Given the increasing emphasis that sustainable development is a tool to be used by the planning profession, there is little empirical evidence regarding the extent to which a community's official plan promotes sustainable principles. Future research may expand on the assessment of additional planning documents and reports that informed the development of the official plan and analyzing the association between the policies. Furthermore, a more comprehensive study focusing on the relationship of high-quality plans, implementation, and tangible planning outcomes in a community.